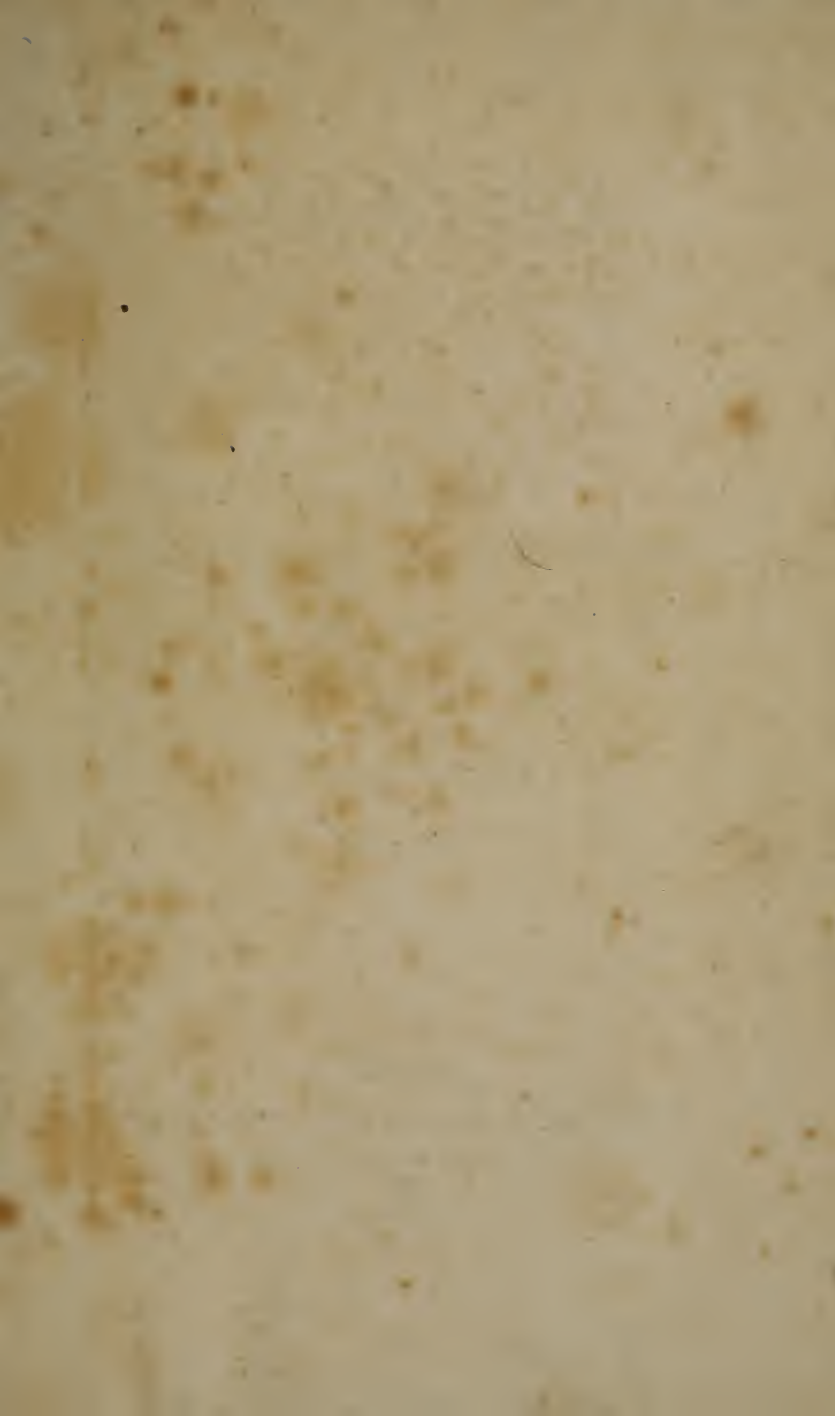


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RAVENSCLIFFE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"EMILIA WYNDHAM," "THE WILMINGTONS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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RAVENSCLIFFE.

CHAPTER I.

The intuitive decision of a bright
And thorough-edged intellect, to part
Error from crime.

TENNYSON.

THE character of Edwin presented a singular and beautiful combination of opposite qualities. The best qualities of the father and the mother were here curiously and beautifully blended. To the tender softness of the mother's heart, was added the strength and courage of his father's temper. The disposition to defy difficulty, to make light of opinion,

to despise censure in 'a just cause, was redeemed from the overbearing insolence which had rendered such qualities almost odious in Randal Langford, by the sweetness of a disposition the most cordial, affectionate, and kind.

Edwin loved every one. All the world seemed to find a share in his large expansive heart; but the objects of his more peculiar affection were few,—and among those his father alone excited an admiration which approached to passion. Of all the living world around them, Edwin alone, by some magic power of sympathy, seemed to discern the latent excellencies which lay buried under his father's harsh and repulsive exterior. Capable of intense feeling himself, he seemed alone to comprehend those depths of sensibility in his father's character which, when found, rendered him so interesting. His own disposition was but little understood; his fine earnest and feeling temperament was hidden to the cursory observer by the gay careless charm of his manner. Contrasted as they were in externals, this was the sacred relation which bound them to each

other; by Edwin understood and appreciated, by Randal Langford as intensely felt, but neither understood nor appreciated.

Edwin, therefore, loved his father as few hearts are capable of loving any one,—as rarely any son is found to love his father. And the sentiment was, as we have seen, returned, though in secret, with an intensity which not all the coldness and severity of outward deportment could altogether conceal from the instincts of the son.

Their mutual affection assumed strange forms; they seemed fated to live in perpetual contradiction,—almost at variance with each other; upon no one subject scarcely did they seem to think or feel alike. And yet there were glimpses of light, flashes of a strange sympathetic intelligence, a something that would in an instant strike from heart to heart—from eye to eye—a something that rendered even contradiction from each other more dear than acquiescence from any other creature in the world.

He was Eleanor's son, too. The living

image of that creature whose memory lived undying in Randal Langford's heart. It followed him wherever he went, shared in whatever he felt ; the accents of her low sweet voice, the pressure of her soft tender hand, seemed ever mingling, like some strain of indistinct melody, with all he thought or did,—indistinct and evanescent, like those harpings heard by the soul, not by the ear,—which have visited and consoled the forlorn moments of the mourner. Softening, by their heavenly visitations, the harsh and painful contradiction of that outer world with which they are so little in unison.

Some years had elapsed, indeed, it was not till between two and three years after his second marriage, that the perusal of her posthumous papers had made Randal Langford acquainted with the secret history of Eleanor's heart.

The effect the full understanding of all which had occurred produced, was contradictory. It softened and allayed the bitterness of the feelings which he had

nourished against his unhappy wife's memory, to find how thoroughly sincere in intention, at least, she had been towards him. How entirely the fatal dissimulation she had practised had arisen from a generous regard to his happiness; how truly she had loved and respected him, even whilst another was the secret master of her heart; and how faithfully and affectionately she had endeavoured not only to constitute his happiness, but to find her own in their union.

He understood at last the full worth of the being whom he had so passionately adored; and he had the consolation, sorrowful, but great, of restoring her to that place in his esteem which she had forfeited. The fierce war of contending passions was subdued; a sweet but settled peace succeeded; and from the time this change in his feelings took place, he kept Edwin at home. Hitherto he had maintained the appearance he at first felt, or assumed, of the greatest indifference to the child, and he had suffered him, after his mother's death, to be claimed and carried away by Lady Wharncliffe, who

took equal comfort and amusement in spoiling the lovely little creature in every possible manner; but henceforward the father took him to himself.

Lady Wharncliffe made every opposition in her power. The idea of placing this sweet child under the care of "that beetled-browed vulgar step-mother of his," as she designated the present Mrs. Langford, was not to be endured. However, she was in some degree pacified by Randal's assurance that, aware of the advantages, in many respects, of his long residence with the polished Wharncliffes, he was ready to promise, that the boy should be much with her; and also by assuring herself that Edwin, who was a bold spirited little fellow, blue-eyed and fair-haired as he was, "would soon thrash that black, rascally, little imp of Madame Woodly Langford's to atoms, if he dared to vex him."

Madame Woodly Langford, as Lady Wharncliffe chose to call her, showed no disposition to be behindhand with the worst step-dame that ever was maligned in old legend. She perfectly adored her

own ugly little son, and was ready to feel everything which selfish, motherly jealousy could inspire, against the beautiful elder brother. That noble animated child, with his large Danish blue eyes, his lovely fair complexion, his open brow, his profusion of fine curling hair, his speaking countenance and graceful gestures, contrasted very unfavourably with her own dark, sullen, thin, withering, unprepossessing child; who, however, had been so flattered and indulged since he came into the world, that had he been heir-apparent of these three United Kingdoms, he could hardly have been made of more importance.

He was a young child still when Edwin came to live at home, but it was not too early for him to feel that, to the full extent, he was king in his own nursery, lord paramount of all the playthings and childish possessions of the place, and he resented the irruption of the new-comer, and resisted to the uttermost any claim upon his part, to share in its indulgences and immunities.

Edwin was generous and high-hearted,

and, like other generous high-hearted children, prone to love and prompt to yield. Yet he had a spirit of his own, and moreover he had a nurse of his own; and between the two nurses the jealous rivalry excited was still keener than between the two children.

Meadows, the young Edwin's nurse, considered herself entitled, as nurse to the heir-apparent, to a higher position and to more respect and observance than that which Roberts, as attendant on the second son, ought to claim.

But Roberts was in possession, and had been from the first installed as head-nurse in the reigning Mrs. Langford's family, with the additional dignity, moreover, of having a maid exclusively to wait upon herself.

Meadows had to get one of the housemaids, or who she could, to bring up water and carry up and down for her. Roberts had only to command and to be obeyed; and she obstinately resisted the slightest attempts upon the part of the under-nurse to show her obligingness by making herself in any way useful.

There Priest—for this singular name having been, time out of mind, an hereditary appendage of the heirs of the family, Mrs. Langford had insisted upon giving it her son, Randal Priest Langford being his father's name, his grandfather's, and his great grandfather's likewise—there Priest had been accustomed to sit, monarch of all he surveyed, at the head of his own nursery-table, were it at dinner or were it at tea; but now, when Edwin appeared upon the scene, this pretension upon the part of the *second* son, was by Mrs. Meadows vigorously resisted. She loudly asserted before the two children, who, staring with all their eyes and listening with all their ears, stood there watching the issue of the contest, that the head of the table belonged of right to the heir.

The heir of Ravenscliffe, and what was worse he who was not the heir of Ravenscliffe, in this manner received their first impressions as to the profit and loss of their relative positions. The mortification of the deposed child, as may well be believed, far exceeded in strength the satis-

faction of the other, when the point, after much warm debate, was at last carried against him.

“Why should we not sit together?” said little Edwin, now for the first time aware of the importance that attached to a precedence in places at table. “Let us sit side by side, Meadows. There, Priest, don’t roar so,” for the child had burst out into an extravagance of passion far beyond his years when forced to surrender his privileges. “Don’t roar like a great bull, brother. Set his chair side by side with mine—will that do, *baby*?”

Priest was offended at being called “baby,” and doubly resentful at the contemptuous way in which the word was uttered, and no little mortified by being invited to share a privilege till then exclusive; but his tears stopped, and he suffered himself to be placed side by side with Edwin, at the head of the table,—where he sat playing with his bread and butter in sulky silence, and every now and then casting looks of sullen envy at his brother.

Mrs. Langford had seemed inclined at first to take an active and decisive part

in these nursery dissensions, and to assert for her son a claim to dignities and indulgences to which he had no right; but on one occasion, when Randal Langford happened to overhear a debate upon this subject, he had at once interfered, and with so high a hand, setting down Mrs. Langford and her pretensions with so much sarcastic severity, and deciding the matter so haughtily in favour of his first-born, that the matter was henceforward settled. Much to the mortification of Mrs. Langford, and the cause of great hidden jealousy and dislike on her part.

From that time she might be said to hate Edwin. She hated him, as a child—she hated him still more, as a boy—she dreaded and hated him yet more when a young man. She was his hidden, implacable, and persevering enemy, and the main purpose of her life seemed to be, by every means in her power, to sap the foundations of his father's predilections, and to envenom any causes of opposition or contradiction which might arise. To advance her own son in every possible way was the

object upon which she was perseveringly bent, and in pursuit of this, her first care was that no pains should be spared in his education. Edwin went here and there; was now at Lidcote Hall, now at Ravenscliffe—indulged and flattered on all sides, his studies desultory, his time in great measure at his own disposal, getting on or not getting on as the chance might be.

Priest, under the care of a very clever and assiduous tutor, was kept by his calculating and unsparing mother, steadily to his tasks. With her the present happiness of the boy was as nothing compared with her views of ambition. She seemed resolved that Priest should as far excel his brother in abilities and learning, as he was eclipsed by him in every other way.

In the meantime, whilst, as a partial and unprincipled mother, she was thus intent upon what she considered the interests of her son, she appears to have almost overlooked the little Emma, who was allowed to scramble about the woods, and do almost exactly what she liked, when out of her mother's sight; but be it understood that

she was expected to be implicitly obedient when in it. Emma, wild, rough, and daring, was always tearing her frocks, dabbling her petticoats, getting into scrapes, ready to double her fist in her own defence, and for ever obtruding herself where nobody wanted her; so that before she was ten years old, she had established for herself the character of being the most odious bore and inveterate tom-boy that ever disgraced a family. And yet, in spite of the offensive rudeness of her manners, and her rough, untamed appearance, there was a something in Emma's large, sparkling black eyes, her fresh and open countenance, and the good-humoured expression of her mouth, which promised better things,—a better promise than, from the utter indiscipline in which she was allowed to live, there seemed any chance of being performed.

Thus the family of Randal Langford had grown up. And now Edwin is just come of age: and with much secret heart-burning and envy has Mrs. Langford witnessed the ceremonies with which it was the invariable custom of the family to celebrate

the majority of the heir. The dinner to the tenantry, the roasted ox and sheep, the butts of ale, the cheering and the toasts to long life and prosperity, and all the usual festive arrangements of so joyous an occasion, had been as drops of distilled wormwood to her. She had a curious expression of face at times, had Madam Woodly Langford, as she walked about amid the dinner-tables, leaning upon Edwin's arm, followed by her own son Priest at a respectful distance. She looked, as the good gossips around her observed, "no how." Nobody liked Mrs. Langford.

These events had taken place a few weeks before the scene in Mr. Langford's study, where Edwin, who was the idol, as he was the advocate and friend of every creature upon the property, had ventured to step between the deserved punishment and Black Will. Black Will being, it must be confessed, a most incorrigible poacher, though, in other respects, not a bad fellow.

Don't think by this, I am inclined to fall into the usual strain about poachers,

and endeavour to excite sympathy with a set of good-for-nothing fellows (because they are not allowed to ramble about other people's property, ready for all sorts of mischief; and because they are not allowed to snare hares and pheasants, certainly fed upon no corn of theirs,) when I simply state the fact, that Black Will was not in other respects a bad fellow, such as many poachers, I am sorry to say are,—though some are not.

That he was not likely to improve, or continue among the *not* very bad, if he persisted in his lawless trade, Edwin was as well aware as was his father; but he differed as to the means to be pursued in reclaiming him. And as was usually the case when he thought himself in the right and the good of another was concerned, he persisted in considering the matter in his own way.

Black Will had been caught by the gamekeeper the night before, whilst looking after his springes for pheasants, in one of the woods. The young fellow was still in custody at the keeper's lodge, and had

not yet been brought before the magistrate, to be committed to prison.

What did Edwin do? The first thing was, as we have seen, to go to the study with old Humphreys—who came to him in the bitterest distress, crying like a child—and endeavour to second him whilst pleading for mercy with Mr. Langford.

The second — when he found all his entreaties for mercy vain, and that, moreover, his father under the provocation he felt at his perseverance, was beginning to give way to that harshness of manner, which Edwin could never witness without excessive, almost shuddering pain—his next step was, as we have seen, to quit the room — and go — where? Direct to the keeper's lodge. For what purpose?

“Will, this is a bad story I hear of you,” said the young man, upon entering the little back-kitchen of the keeper's lodge, with that look of fresh, open-hearted kindness, which made him the favourite of every one.

Poor Will, in much distress, was sitting by the fire, his head buried in his hands, his air the most disconsolate.

“This is a shocking bad history I hear of you, Will. How come you, my lad, to take to such courses? You ought to have known better, Will. You bore the character of being an honest fellow—a lad of honour—but what is poaching? Is it not another name for stealing? No honest, or honourable man will do that. You should not have done it—indeed, you should not have done it, Will.”

“Why, sir—why, Mr. Edwin—sorry I am, very sorry. And more ashamed am I to stand before you, Mr. Edwin, having done that which you signify as stealing—though sure and certain am I, it never struck me in that light, or I would not have done it—no, I’d ha’ cut my right hand off sooner than I’d ha’ done it.”

“But how could you be such a dolt and an idiot, Will, as not to look upon it in that light?”

“Why, sir, you see as how I was told—many there be in this country as hold to it—as how game be of the free commoners

of nature, and one man has a right to it just as good as another. There be no gamekeepers, or such like, in the American or African woods and wilds, as I've heard tell."

"True enough; but American and African wilds are not parted and parcelled, and bought and sold, and settled by the laws to be this man's and that. You can't and must not compare the two cases, Will; for they are altogether different. Here, the land is portioned out to separate men's possession; and, in consequence, they go to great expense upon it; and they grow, at much cost, the food upon which these wild creatures subsist; and, therefore, they have a right to them—a right neither you nor I can have to what is reared upon another man's land; and, besides, you can't go upon another man's land, by the law of this country, to get at the game, without committing a trespass. All this, perhaps, seems hard to some of you; but, depend upon it, Will, the law that protects the great and strong man in the possession of his property, shows its strength still more in that it

shields the poor weak, man in the possession of his. We can't live in the brotherhood of civil society, and have the immunities and privileges of a naked savage at the same time. My lad, you and other lawless fellows like you, ought to recollect this when they feel cramped and fettered by the usages and customs of a well-ordered country. We can't have everything at once. If there is to be property, many a man will feel that of another come in his way. If there must be laws for all, there may be times when many of us would be glad to be well rid of them: but this won't do—we must take the good and the bad together; and if the law will not allow another man to come into your garden, break your hedge, and cut your cabbages, or even shoot the throstles on your cherry-tree, which build there every spring, and which you and your children are so fond of—neither will it allow you to trample down my father's copses, and break his trees, and kill the game which he preserves and feeds at so much expense and care. You may call it hard and unjust, if you will; but I

call it just and equal. Moreover, it keeps you in your bed at due hours of the night, and out of the company of a set of good-for-nothing rascallions; and thus, the law is your best friend in every sense, Master William."

"Oh! Mr. Edwin, if I had but thought of this before. All you say is as true as gold. If I had but looked upon it in that light, never—never, would I have set a spring—not to save my life, sir—And now, to be transported for seven years—seven years, Mr. Edwin!—think of that. And what's to become of my wife, poor Maggie, and my helpless babes? Oh sir! sir!—Will Mr. Langford show no mercy?"

"I can't tell you; I fear not. My father, you know, considers it a matter of principle to carry the laws of his country into execution."

"And do you? do you? Oh, Mr. Edwin!—Seven years for a brace of hares!"

"No, I do not."

"But what can I do? What must I do?" and the poor man began to wring

his hands in the extremity of his distress.

“Just walk out of that door,” said Edwin, taking a pass-key from his pocket and applying it to a back-door of the kitchen, which opened into the thick wood, surrounding the lodge, “and walk off; and manage to keep yourself hidden until I tell old Humphreys what you had best do. For as to being locked up with fetters, in a jail, for I don’t know how long, and then being tried and transported for seven years, all for stealing a brace of hares—I hold it to be a cruel and unjust measure to a man, and I, for one, will neither be art or part in it. So,” opening the door as he spoke, “off with you; and I’ll sit here by the fire, keeping your place warm till the keeper comes.”

CHAPTER II.

Oh shame! Oh fear and pain! ye make life weary,—
A burden hard to bear;
The way of death, at times, seems not more dreary
Than ours, through dark despair!

W. C. BENNETT.

THE air rushed fresh and sweet into the cottage, as the door opened, giving a view of the copsy and glady wood beyond, now in all the glorious heavy green of summer. Slight intervals between the trees afforded views of the wild and moory mountains beyond, and fresh rushed the blood to the sallow cheek of Black Will, as seizing the hand of his benefactor, he impressed upon it a passionate kiss, then darted forwards, and was out of sight in a moment.

Edwin, having closed and locked the door after him, returned to the chair the

young man had quitted, and sat down. He was resolved to wait there for an hour at least, in order to ensure the escape of Black Will, by detaining the keeper, should he return to look after his prisoner; whom, it may seem, he had left but slenderly guarded. The keeper had relied, upon the impossibility of his escape from the little room in which he had shut him up, for the window was closely defended by what are called iron stanchions, and the door was fastened by a huge lock and chain, which Edwin's pass-key opened. Will, being without tools of any sort, even his knife having been taken away when he was searched, could not by possibility have forced it, even if he had thought of attempting such a thing,—a matter which, poor fellow, in his despondency, it entered not into his head to do.

Edwin, then, having stood at the door some little time, watching till the figure of Black Will was lost among the thick branches of the underwood which grew so closely round the back of the cottage, having gazed a little round upon the

scene, and filled his soul with the beautiful images afforded by that woodland nature of which he was so passionately fond, closed the door, locked it, returned the pass-key to his pocket, and came and sat down upon the chair which Black Will had just occupied. Seated there, in stillness and solitude,—for the only sounds to be heard was the sort of whispers which seems always going on among the summer leaves,—the clucking of a hen with her chickens under the window,—now and then the crow of a pheasant in the wood ;—seated there, and the first hurry of delight, at the idea that the poor fellow was at liberty, over, Edwin began to reflect upon what he had done. He asked himself whether he had been right or wrong—what his father *would* think of it, and how, in common justice, he *ought* to think of it. Questions not to be very satisfactorily answered, when once they were put—for as to the right and wrong of assisting Black Will to escape, I know of few so difficult. It is a hard matter to decide whether we are to set ourselves up for judges of an existing law,—not as

regards the alteration and improvement of it, but as to the obeying or defying its requisitions, so long as it continues to exist. It is another hard question, which perhaps is only the same in other words in detail, how far we are bound to detain, or how far we are warranted in assisting the escape of a prisoner, whom we know to be guilty of an infraction of the statute, but whose offence is, in our judgment, by that very statute, visited with a punishment contrary to the rules of natural equity.

The natural feeling of mankind unquestionably in this latter case runs in favour of the offender, as is proved by the experience of every day ; and I question whether there would be a man to be found now who would assist in the prosecution, or refuse to favour the escape, of one whose sentence, if convicted, would be to be hanged for stealing five shillings in a dwelling-house.

To Edwin, the punishment of transportation for poaching two hares appeared enormous ; and he could not endure the idea of a good-natured young scapegrace

like Black Will, with no harm in him, but a little too much fondness for society, without being very choice as to its character,—and an inordinate passion for field-sports, —in excuse of which errors he might plead the example of many of his betters,—he could not endure the idea of seeing the poor lad and his whole family plunged into the extremity of distress upon this account. And yet he saw that for him not only to connive at, but openly to be the cause of an offender's escape (for excuse it as he might, there could be no doubt but that Black Will was, as far as poaching was concerned, a notorious offender, and had kept company with a gang of good-for-nothing fellows, the pest of the country,) was a very doubtful sort of action. He saw how full of meaning, and of dangerous meaning in the eyes of the commoner sort, his thus openly flying in the face of the law, and of his father's known opinions, must be; affording a precedent for contempt and defiance as regarded both. From him, too, so universally popular, and whose proceedings carried

such weight among his father's dependents.

Would it not have been better to have let matters take their course, and then have used all his influence in behalf of mitigation of punishment? Was not poaching a very injurious thing, not as regarded the mere destruction of game,—that was a motive, as you will believe, which entered little or not at all into his consideration,—but as respects the moral habits of those who surrounded him?

How injurious a practice it must be to these half-civilized rustics to assemble at night in order to creep out in secret and commit a breach of the law, doing what must by the very necessity of the case be a deed of darkness; and, simply as such, a deed of very injurious moral effect upon the susceptible imaginations of the uncultivated. And moreover, perpetrated in defiance of the secret intimations of each man's conscience, however much he might slur the matter over to himself. It required no great necessity of perception to decide that these things must be excessively bad.

And, had he not, by the act just performed, done more to authorize poaching than could have been done almost by any one in any manner? He felt very much puzzled and dissatisfied with himself.

Then his thoughts turned towards his father,—his stern and inflexible, but just and righteous father; the man who never swerved from the exact line of rectitude himself, and never pardoned any one who did;—whose maxims of conduct were so rigid, — whose practice so inexorable; who was so utterly insensible to all the pleadings of pity, or the suggestions of compassion, where the wrong or the crime were undeniable. He who never spared himself, be the circumstances what they might, and who listened to neither excuse nor extenuation for the failings of others. His father, with whom upon such points, —upon so many points,—he disagreed, and yet whom he esteemed and respected beyond words, and loved with that strange love which was the ruling impulse of his heart.

This iron father would, he knew, be

exceedingly displeased,—perhaps offended past forgiveness.

He understood his father's temper but too well. He must disapprove his conduct,—and what might not be the extent of his anger? He would consider it as a personal affront to himself,—and what personal affront had he ever been known to forgive?

Edwin began to feel very uncomfortable. It was not that he exactly feared his father. He was a high-spirited courageous being, and in one sense it might be said he feared nothing: but he loved Randal Langford, and when he was displeased and angry, the pain his son felt is not to be described.

So he sat there, digesting these unpleasant thoughts, for something more than half an hour; his disagreeable reflections every now and then brightened as with an irresistible gush of joy, as the thought flashed up that Black Will was safe,—at liberty,—scouring the country in freedom, and that every ten minutes the game-keeper delayed his return, the chance of his being retaken was diminishing.

About three-quarters of an hour might have elapsed in this way, when at last the voice of the keeper was heard calling to his dogs as he entered the kitchen, and, approaching the room where Edwin sat, he unlocked the door, expecting to see his prisoner sitting there as he had left him.

A man there certainly was, seated in the chair by the fire; but not Black Will, assuredly—and when he turned his head and lifted up his face, the keeper recognized his young master.

“You, sir, here!” he exclaimed, astonished, “And where,—where is that rascal, my prisoner?”

“Over the hills and far away, by this time,” said Edwin.

“What can you mean by that, Master Edwin? I left him safe enough here.”

“It’s not very safe custody when a man is left locked up in a little room like this upon the ground-floor, and two doors and one window to it,” said Edwin.

“But the window is close barred, and all the bars in their places, and the door was still locked:” going up to it, and shaking it; “and so was the other barred

outside;—and how you got in, Master Edwin, and how he got out puzzles me to guess. But I know what the squire will say to it, happen as it might; namely, that it's all my fault for having been so careless;—though sure and certain I had him safe, and unless he's gone through the keyhole,—or the devil has carried him off in a gale of wind,—I'm sure I can't think how he went . . . but excuses, we all know, don't serve with the squire, and I shall lose my place as sure as I stand here, and I have served him, man and boy, this five-and-forty year. Oh, dear! oh, dear! Who'd have thought it, and how could it be!" Thus the poor keeper kept ejaculating, as he went from door to window, from window to door,—shaking the stanchions of the one, and trying the locks of the other, and for the twentieth time, assuring himself that all was just as he left it.

"Oh dear! oh dear! What will become on us all? I am sure I would rather have paid two hundred pounds than that this should have happened. Oh, dear! oh, how could I be so overseen as to leave

him? You said right, master Edwin, and it's just what the squire will say.—It was careless, no doubt, and the squire never forgives anything what's careless.—But who'd a thought he could ha' got through the keyhole, or between them stanchions, as sure he must have done—but then the window's fastened inside,—how could it be? how could it be? Now I'm ruined, dead ruined! Oh, sure what an unlucky day this one has been to me!”

“But, sir,”—suddenly coming up to Edwin, who stood there with his back to the wall, eying the poor keeper with much compassion, and with the perplexity and discomfiture of his mind very much increased by this new aspect of things, —“sir, you've been fastened up here with the prisoner, or I should say without him. You can tell, mayhap.—Pray, was he gone when you came in, or how was it?—how was it? What a fool I am losing time, vexing myself like a baby; perhaps it's not long. Do tell me, good Master Edwin, do you know anything?”

“Yes, Greenlow, I know all about it. Don't vex yourself in this way. I only

am in fault; no blame will fall upon you."

"You in the wrong? How came you to be in the wrong?—No, Master Edwin, it's very kind and generous, and like yourself to be ready to take the blame upon your own shoulders; but there'll be no putting the change upon Master Langford. The squire was never known to let off the wrong doer or punish the right one. I can't say as how I think myself so very much to blame, but he'll think so, and it's all one—he never forgives a servant for a breach of duty, be it done with intention or without intention; all's as one to the squire—He takes no excuses—what's done is done. And to think I have served him five-and-forty years, and to be turned adrift at last! Oh, Master Edwin!——"

And the poor gamekeeper, quite overcome with his feelings, sat down upon the vacant chair, and began to cry like a child, the big tears coursing each other rapidly down his bronzed and weather-worn cheeks. Edwin could bear this no longer.

“Don’t, Greenlow,” he said, coming close up to the keeper; and laying his hand upon his shoulder, he bent down and looked him in the face so kindly! “don’t cry, my good fellow; you are not the least to blame, and I am sorry I said anything to make you fancy so.—The plain truth of the case is, I let Black Will out by that door with my father’s pass-key, which I chanced to have in my pocket,” producing it, “for I was very sorry for him, and vexed at heart at what was hanging over his head.—And now, whether I have done wrong or right, God knows, for I am sure I do not—But wrong or right, the deed is mine, and I’ll take good care to exculpate you entirely, Greenlow.”

“And tell your father you deliberately and of fixed purpose came here and let Black Will out?” said the keeper, staring at Edwin with eyes filled with dismay. “Na, na, that will never do.”

“It must do,—for it’s unluckily the truth,” said Edwin, forcing a laugh.

“It will never, never do,” repeated the keeper, “Master Langford. Your

father, sir,—why it's a thing he'd never forgive, this flying in the face of his authority, as one may say. No, not even from you, Master Edwin, will he take it—And his anger, when his spirit's once up, oh ! it's terrible ! Na, na, this he must never, never know, Master Edwin."

"I thought you said just now that it was indifferent to him whether he was disobeyed through heedlessness or intention?" said Edwin, endeavouring to speak carelessly.

"Did I ? Well, that's not it though. He won't forget an heedlessness—that is, he'll never take it as an excuse. 'The thing's done—I care not why, or how,' he'll say. But what it would be if he suspected any one really dared defy and cross him in this way—a thing mortal man never yet ventured upon—it passes me to tell, oh ! it passes me to tell ! And his own son ! I'd rather a thousand and a thousand times stand the brunt of it myself—that I would."

"You're a very generous fellow, Greenlow, I see that," said the young man ;

“but I think you see this matter in quite too serious a light. My father loves me, and I am sure I love and respect him. I may have done wrong; I don’t know—he at all events will think so. However, I can stand his displeasure.—It can’t last very long—and at all events poor Black Will has escaped a jail, and, take my word for it, you shan’t suffer, Greenlow.”

The keeper shook his head.

“You shall not suffer.—I am resolved upon that, at all events,” repeated Edwin, resolutely.

The keeper shook his head again.

“What do you mean by that incredulous shake of the head, Greenlow?” said Edwin; “do you not rely upon my word? Do you think I would stand by, and see another man thrashed in my place?”

“No, that you wouldn’t, I’ll be sworn—rather be thrashed in his! But, it’ll never never do, Master Edwin—trust me, it’ll never do—for you to own to this—It won’t—indeed, it won’t! Better let me bear the blame. Never mind me—I am but a poor man, and a servant; he can but turn

me off. I should be sorry, main sorry, to be put out of this,"—looking wistfully round him; "but what's that to his own son and heir?"

"As to being his heir, that is neither *heir* nor there," said Edwin, trying at a bad joke; "but, as to being his son—why, if that circumstance won't tell in my favour, I don't know what will."

"It won't—it won't, sir—take my word for it, it won't. Mr. Langford's just one of that rare sort—we've all know'd it of him, that has know'd him, these forty years, and more, as I have done—the better he loves and likes, and the nearer nature *should* speak, the worse it is with him when he's offended. Why,—there was your angel mother, sir; he loved her as the apple of his eye—He worshipped the very ground upon which she trod: and yet she, some way or other—no one ever knew how—managed to offend him, and from that day to this, it's my belief, he never has forgiven her for it."

The son said nothing to this, but looked shocked. The gamekeeper went on, lowering his voice to a whisper.

“And then, Mr. Edwin — it’s neither here nor there with me, and no business of mine—but we all love you so—and you know, sir, a snake in the grass is a snake in the grass—and comes stealing, stealing, and bites a man’s heel; and he’s all as one as dead of the venom or e’er he knows where he is And did you never hear speak of poisoning a man’s ear?—There’s those who go near to poison Mr. Langford’s ear, sir; and, goodness he knows! there’s no need o’ that.”

“What do you mean?”

“Step-mothers, sir.”

“Step-mothers! — Don’t talk in that way to me, Greenlow!” cried Edwin, angrily; “I’ll have none of this vulgar abuse of step-mothers uttered before my face. I won’t allow of it—you know I won’t.”

“I didn’t mean to offend, sir. There be excellent step-mothers, as good as bad mothers; and, sure, I ha’ cause to say so—for hadn’t I one?—and was she not a true mother to me? Why—she’s living still: you remember her, sure, Mr. Edwin, at her brother’s? and five pounds, every

Christmas, has she from me—as sure as Christmas comes. But, all women are not alike; and there *be* step-mothers. It's a envious sort of trade, sir, when one's first son is a second son."

"Have done, Greenlow! If you ever venture to say such a word as this to me again, I'll never cross your threshold more!"

"I beg your pardon, sir—I hope no offence. I'm only anxious, and so I'll return to the point, Mr. Edwin, at once. You *must not* take this upon yourself, sir, that's all; and one word's as good as ten thousand."

"So it is—and I must and will tell truth, and shame the devil," answered Edwin, shaking hands with Greenlow, and again trying to laugh; "And so, good morning to you, my man; for, I take it"—looking at his watch—"Black Will is pretty clear of the country by this time."

CHAPTER III.

Far back—far back my mind must go,
To reach the well-spring of this woe!

White Doe of Rylstone.

“HOLD your tongue, Madam! You need not say one syllable more. It is not very becoming in you, let me tell you, to harangue thus in aggravation of the conduct you have made me acquainted with.”

So spoke Mr. Langford, who was walking up and down his study, with firm but somewhat hasty steps, and evidently suffering under great disturbance of mind.

“It is not necessary,—and, I repeat it, is not becoming in you to dwell upon the aggravating circumstances of an affront,—of conduct which I feel”

“Which you must feel—which you cannot help feeling, as every one must do for you. But, far from wishing to aggravate, on the contrary, I wish to extenuate. I know the pain and resentment such behaviour must create;—for what is so painful as resentment against those we love, — and who can help loving him? —I am sure I can’t, for one. He is a creature formed to be doted on, — and everybody dotes upon him. There is not a servant in the house,—not a tenant upon the estate,—not the poorest cottager near us, that does not worship—that would not be ready to die for Edwin!”

“Very likely. Some bear, as you say, this strange power of fascination about them, and obtain a love they little care to deserve—others, like Macbeth, excite a hidden ill-will, without having, like him, merited it—and wherever they go, all men are ready to mutter against them curses, not loud but deep.”

“Painful,” said she, “very painful; but your darling son seems destined to escape the penalty which usually attends all well-asserted authority. His conduct

is at least in strong contrast with yours ; and whilst you are generously and bravely sacrificing your popularity, in the maintenance of discipline and order, what you lose cannot be said to be altogether lost,—for its reflection falls upon him,—and with the power of a sort of double reflection ? ”

“ Ta, ta, ta,—you talk like a book, ma’am ; your metaphors are too far-fetched for me. In plain English, I suppose, you mean to say that Edwin is worshipped and I am detested.”

“ Nay, I am sure I did not say that.”

“ Said or not,—it’s *true* ! ”

“ It’s a very wrong thing somewhere, or in somebody, if it be true,—that I am sure of,” she answered, with warmth.

“ May be so ; injustice is seldom committed without something of that sort.”

“ And I do think,” Mrs. Langford went on, as if speaking to herself,—“ that no son, however amiable he may be, no, not if he be the sweetest, most accomplished young man in the world, does exactly right in thus setting himself up, as one may say, in the opposition-coach

to his father; but it's what all heir-apparents do, they say,—from the prince next the throne, to the landholder of half-a-dozen acres. But it's wrong and it's mistaken,—for nothing abates authority, nothing degrades a man in other people's eyes, nothing weakens his hands like this. Like a general persuasion that he and his eldest son, don't exactly draw together; that the young man indulges himself in criticising, censuring, and openly counteracting his father's conduct. Nay, that he sets him, as some do, at daring and open defiance;—favouring the escape—actually opening the door for escape to a criminal, whom he knows his father to be particularly anxious to convict and punish. Well, 'One may steal a horse, when another may not look over a hedge,' is a proverb I have had more than once occasion to apply."

An impatient shrug of the shoulder was all the answer this speech received. Mr. Langford took two or three turns more up and down the room,—then, turning abruptly to his wife, asked,—

"Is the young man come in?"

“ Yes, just come in.”

“ Tell some one to send him up to speak to me.”

“ Well, sir,” as the door opened, and his son presented himself, “ it seems I have to send for you. You were not, it appears, coming to me ? ”

“ Yes, sir, I was coming to inform you of, and to ask your pardon for what I have been venturing to do.”

“ That’s what you were coming for, is it ? You were aware, I suppose, that by a curious accident, your share in this scandalous offence against justice has been discovered and revealed to me by”

“ By Mrs. Langford, sir. Yes, sir, I have just been made aware of it—but I was coming before I knew that, with the intention of telling you everything myself.”

“ I am bound to believe you, as you say it.”

“ I should think so, sir.”

“ You should think so ! We are very short with our answers, as it seems to me, this morning. We have just been outraging the plainest obligations which we

owe to society. And if I am to judge by your eye and your attitude, sir, we are not very ill-prepared to resist those of blood."

"I do not know what is meant by that. No offence, sir, to either—least of all to the claims of blood, was intended.—I came here to ask your pardon for that which, under an impulse of compassion, and perhaps of something more, I have done. I intended no outrage to the laws of my country—of which, indeed, I was not thinking—and I am sure I never meant offence to you."

"Of whom, perhaps, you were thinking as little?"

"I thought only of poor Will, and six months' jail, and after that, seven years' transportation,—and all for snaring a couple of vile hares. I own I had no right to set myself up as an arbiter between you and your dependents."

"An arbiter between me and my dependents! I should think not, sir," cried his father, turning round from where he stood—for he had still kept pacing up and down the room—and haughtily confronting Edwin—eyeing him from head to

foot. "Erect yourself into an arbiter between me and my dependents! I should think not. Erect yourself into an arbiter! And what are you, sir—a raw, inexperienced youth—to set yourself to arbitrate upon anything?—You!—a child like you!"

"I am sorry if I said anything absurd. I was endeavouring to make my excuses and apologies."

"Pretty apologies! And you know I never admit excuses."

"Perhaps it might be better sometimes so to do," muttered Edwin.

"Again!—At it again!"

"Again at what?"

"Censuring and carping at me and at my words. I tell you I will not allow it, sir. What is it to me, the judgment you may choose to pass, either upon what I do or what I say?"

"Nothing," Edwin replied.

But never was falser assertion made. Little did he divine, little did any one else in the world divine, how the father's heart yearned to obtain that approbation of which he spoke with so much arrogant contempt.

“ Well, sir,”—after an interval of silence, during which Mr. Langford had resumed his walk up and down the room, but had now stopped once again and stood before him, fixing his eye sternly upon his son’s face, — “ and so our notions happening to be diametrically opposite to each other, you have thought proper, it seems, to signify your disapprobation in the most insulting and offensive manner you could possibly have chosen,—by deliberately going and setting the fellow at liberty whom you knew I was most solicitous to convict and punish. And in mitigation of whose punishment you had this very morning yourself pleaded in vain ?”

“ It was *because* I had myself this very morning pleaded in vain.”

“ And had thus become acquainted with my determination, and the reasons for it. And so it seems precisely for this reason, precisely because your father’s opinions had been openly declared—you chose to fly in the face of them ; at once outraging the laws of filial piety as well as those of your country — by openly

setting at liberty the very rascal whom I had marked out for an example ? ”

“ It was *because* I did not think he was the right person to make an example of, but just the contrary. It was *because*, of the whole gang,—notorious enough I allow,—I knew him to be the one, and perhaps the only one, in whose favour extenuating circumstances might be pleaded—that I presumed so far.”

“ Your extenuating circumstances, as you call them, had been urged, and without effect ; you knew that.”

“ Certainly, I did ; I was but too well aware of that circumstance.”

“ I had decided, and in my opinion with reason, that the circumstances you pleaded in extenuation were more properly circumstances in aggravation of the offence. That this fellow was of the better sort, of generally regular habits, industrious, sober, and to a certain degree well-instructed, in my opinion, only added to the propriety of making a signal example of him. He ought to have known better, and he *did* know better.”

“ I had not looked upon it in that light,” said Edwin, looking down.

“ Possibly not ; but what I complain of is this presumption and conceit upon the one hand, and this contempt of your father’s judgment and opinion upon the other. You have faith neither in his understanding nor in his moral principles, it would seem. Nay, on the contrary, I observe, that to have expressed an opinion on my part suffices to arouse a contradictory one on yours. I observe this happen almost without exception, and I regret it.”

“ Perhaps,—yes,—I own it,—I fear the severity,—I fear you may be too severe. I find myself on that very account drawn almost irresistibly to espouse the contrary side. I—I wish”

“ You *do* think me too severe, then—Unjustly severe at times, do you ? Speak it out, sir.”

Edwin was silent.

Nay, speak it out — Speak your opinion of your father out. You think him unjustly severe — *unjustly* severe ? — mark the emphasis, sir.”

“ Sometimes I do ; but I am”

“ Say no more, say no more !” cried Randal Langford, turning from his son in much emotion ; wounded to the quick, but resolved if possible to conceal it.

“ Forgive me, sir. Nay, it seems so unnatural, so out of place—what can I say ?—*I*, to sit in judgment ; I beg your pardon — *I*, offering an opinion as to your conduct—*I* . . .”

“ Leave the room, if you please ; I wish to be alone, I wish to have my room to myself ; if it is the same to you,” was all Mr. Langford said, without turning his eyes upon his son, the distress of whose countenance was so visible that it might have pacified any heart. But the deeply-offended father did not—would not see it.

Edwin hesitated—turned away—paused—made a few steps forwards to the place where his father stood. But the attitude of Randal Langford, as he stood there with averted face, was unrelenting. Then the colour began to rise to the young man’s cheek, and the bitter sense of being treated harshly and unjustly to rouse all

there was of spirit within him. He felt it the more keenly, because he knew his own heart; he knew the love and respect there cherished for his father. Alas! that he could but have read how it was upon the other side. Twice again he wistfully glanced at his father; but Randal Langford was immovable. Edwin uttered one heavy sigh, and without a word more quitted the room.

Mr. Langford continued his measured walk from one end of the floor to the other. His features were overspread with the deepest gloom; his eye filled with a sort of stern melancholy. Admiration, which he could not but feel, gratified pride, insulted love, feelings which seemed only to gather fresh force at every new scene of the kind—were contending with a temper which could not brook reproof, obstinacy which could not endure opposition, a mistaken sense of dignity which revolted at the slightest approach to censure, or even criticism, and all the cruel, impassioned

yearnings of the heart. The heart longing for, yet despairing to obtain, the love of the adored object; perhaps but too sensible how little that it was deserved. Every fresh dispute of this nature became a source of additional irritation for Randal Langford, for every word that passed served to increase the father's secret admiration and love, and to aggravate his hidden despair.

Of such elements, a something approaching to hatred is sometimes, alas! engendered. Despair of exciting the sentiments they so wish to inspire drives some men to a kind of frenzied attempt to excite emotion, be it of any sort; and powerless to bestow happiness, they take refuge in the infliction of pain.

The anger Mr. Langford at this moment felt against his son was in proportion to the secret extravagance of his affection, and his desire for revenge to the anguish he felt. There must be a something of love mingling with both, to produce either of these feelings in their present intense degree.

The desire to make Edwin feel—to make Edwin repent the words and actions which

had so deeply offended him, seems to have been the secret motive which led to the ensuing act of injustice ; for Randal Langford, in his most resentful moods, had been rarely, if ever, capable of deliberate injustice. He sent for his gamekeeper, Greenlow, and after severely reprehending him for what he called his unpardonable carelessness in the warding of Black Will, ended by discharging the poor man, at two days' notice, from his service.

Poor Greenlow was seen to leave the study in tears. As he walked sorrowfully home through the woods—those beloved woods, the objects of his unceasing watchfulness and care—as now and then a fine cock pheasant would fly whirring across his path, or be seen perched securely upon the branches of some overhanging oak at a little distance ; as he heard the faint noises of some wild creatures creeping among the bushes ; the indistinct sounds of animal life—that still music of the woods !—as he looked round upon the thicket, the well-known beech and holly-trees, and mountain-ash, broken here and there by the points of rock thrusting forth their

rugged faces among the pines and oaks, as he listened to the pleasant distant sounds of yelping dog, or crowing barndoor cock, or labourers among the neighbouring fields, and felt the full charm of that woodland life, to him so inexpressibly dear even then,—most of all, when he thought of his keeper's lodge—his home, his paradise, where he had lived, man or boy, for more than fifty years—of the pains he had taken to adorn it, of the happy, happy hours spent in it—the poor man's heart died within him, and his furrowed cheeks were flooded with tears.

Then suddenly a still more cruel thought presented itself—his dogs! He should have to part with his dogs! Those dogs, that brace of pointers, Dash and Jack; those setters, Bruno and Brutus—above all, the retriever. That retriever which he reared from a pup, given him by Lord Godolphin's keeper,—the finest breed in the kingdom, and his greatest pride and joy;—and little Jem, the cocker! little Jem, the cocker!

Poor Greenlow—he had no children—his dogs were his children. At thought

of them he could scarcely help crying aloud.

Thus he was proceeding mournfully through the wood, when he saw some one approaching.

It was Edwin. Edwin had left the study nearly as much discomposed as his father; wounded in the tenderest part, and with his temper considerably excited by what he thought his father's injustice. — Hurt yet half offended, — grieved yet displeased, — half contrite and more than half in revolt, at what he felt to be hard measure — whether he had been in the right or the wrong.

He had sought refuge in the solitude of the wood, to endeavour to compose the hurry of his spirits, — and had, without thinking of it, turned in that direction where the keeper's lodge lay. He had not, however, been to the cottage; he had only kept wandering about in the neighbourhood, and was now returning home when he met poor Greenlow, walking along in this disconsolate mood.

He saw that tears were upon the poor man's weather-beaten cheeks, which he seemed too much absorbed in his sorrowful thoughts to have wiped off; and, from the deep dejection of his air, divined that something unfortunate had happened. He feared what it might be; and went up to him, saying,—

“What's amiss, Greenlow? You haven't been sent for to the great house, have you?”

“Ay, but I have—I have—Master Edwin,” replied the keeper, scarcely able to get the words out.

“To my father?—I hope not to my father?”

“To who else but to the squire should it be?”

“But I hope—I trust, Greenlow—he was not very angry with *you*?”

“I've seen Master Langford angry before now, and many a time, goodness knows. Not that anger is the worst; he's never angry; I wish he was. It causes a man's breast to go into a passion like, and the fire that blazes is soon out. No, Master Edwin; your father's never angry,

to call angry, sir—but he is a mortal deal worse. I'd rather meet a bear and a lion at once, as king David did, than come across your father in one of those dumb rages of his—oh! if he would but swear at a man, and have done with it!”

“My father is to be respected, Greenlow, that he has this immense command over his passions. I wish you or I could imitate him.”

“Don't wish it—don't wish it, Master Edwin. Command! You who have the temper of an angel want no command; and as for me—if I do fly out with a stupid dog, or my tiresome old woman now and then—why, its soon over, and who's the worse for it? Na, na, Master Edwin, self-command, as you call it, is a fine thing, and a good thing, may be—but not such self-command as Mr. Langford's.”

“But,” pursued Edwin, to change the conversation,—for he felt but too sensibly the truth of the gamekeeper's remarks, and would often have given all he possessed, and almost all his hopes on earth, to see his father's temper find vent in one burst of spontaneous warmth and passion :

“but I hope, when my father had testified his displeasure, he forgave you your share of what has passed—which was little enough, if any—and that nothing worse has happened, Greenlow?”

“Nothing worse! Oh! Mr. Edwin, I’m a discharged servant; and am to quit the old place the day after to-morrow, at furthest. These woods—my home—my dogs—and all! Oh! Mr. Edwin” And he burst into fresh tears—He could not help it; his stout old heart was quite broken.

“Quit!—discharged!—leave! Impossible!—this can’t be. Impossible! You must have mistaken my father, Greenlow.”

The gamekeeper shook his head sorrowfully.

“You discharged!—You lose your place! And for what, I wonder?”

“Nay, Master Edwin, that’s what I would have asked if I had dared, too; but I never saw your father in such a way. His eyes seemed two burning coals as he spoke,—not flashing fire, as I have seen yours, when you are put up,—bless the very light that falls upon them!—

and you never are, but in another's cause;—no, no, but burning, dry burning coals, as if his very heart was furnishing that same. I was afraid to speak. I dared say nothing for very life. I could only bend down my head, and say humbly, 'As you please, sir.' A man usually finds a spirit rise within him when he thinks he is discharged without good cause; but there was none in me—none left in me. Oh Master Edwin! But your father can be a terrible man when he pleases, sir."

"Terrible or not, this must not be—this shall not be. Mine was the fault, and mine shall be the punishment. I will perish but I will see you righted, Greenlow."

"Ah no—no! don't you now—don't!" pleaded the gamekeeper, but it was more faintly than he had done it in the morning. The dreaded sentence had fallen, and he felt quite overwhelmed with his misfortune. Spirit-broken, unable to contend with the certainty of his distress. He could not remonstrate with the generous energy he had shown before.

Had he, however, offered the utmost

resistance, it would have been in vain. Edwin feared his father's anger, dreaded the idea of exciting that unaccountable irritation which grieved, melted, and revolted him at once. But injustice, and upon his own account, he could not witness without remonstrance. Come what would of it, he must speak, and save the gamekeeper by drawing down the punishment, if need be, upon his own head.

Again, then, the father and the son had to confront each other.

CHAPTER IV.

. . . . That interdicted all debate,
All prayer for this cause or for that ;
All efforts that would turn aside
The headstrong current of their fate.

White Doe of Rylstone.

It was late in the afternoon, but Mr. Langford had not gone out to take his usual walk. After his interview with the gamekeeper, he remained in his study. It would seem as if he expected a visit of remonstrance from Edwin,—for in truth the blow was aimed at him. Conscious of his own injustice, it was in a sort of blind, passionate desire to provoke, to vex, to irritate and rouse his son, that Randal Langford allowed himself in this action; and of all this he was dimly aware, yet in his injustice he persevered. This knowledge

that he was doing wrong seemed only to envenom and exasperate his feelings, without inclining him in the least to retract. What he panted for was, to force a fresh explanation with his son, come what would of it. He would have it out with his son. This sort of silent alienation was insupportable. Come what would, an explosion there must be—anything to give vent to his feelings. He felt as if he wanted to quarrel with him; it would be a relief to openly quarrel with him. Anything would be better than what he endured now.

He was not disappointed of what he wished. After his interview with the gamekeeper, Edwin had hurried home; and as he hastened along, compassion for the poor man, vexation at himself for being the cause of his suffering, and indignation at what he thought the cruel injustice of his father, had worked him up into a state of excitement which was a most unfortunate preparation for the coming interview.

But Edwin was young, rash, ardent, hasty, and hated to delay an explanation.

He had his own peculiar faults—alas! who has not?—and besides, he was so young. So he hastily opened the door, without observing the ceremony of knocking first, and entered the room, his cheeks flushed, and his eyes sparkling.

His father was sitting at his desk. He first looked up, and his cold eyes met those of his son, and then he dropped them, and continued his writing.

The son was not to be daunted by this unpromising reception, which, in his impatience, indeed, he might scarcely be said to observe. He came close up to the side of the large library-table, at which his father sat, and said,

“Will you give me leave to speak a word with you, sir?”

“No; I am engaged.”

Yet he discontinued his occupation, lifted up his hand, and sat still, his hand with the pen in it, resting upon the writing-paper.

“It will take but a moment—all I have to say will be said in a moment. . . .”

Oh, how his heart began to tremble under that austere eye so coldly fastened upon him.

“It will be but for a moment,” he kept repeating, in a hurried, nervous manner; for that eye seemed to freeze his heart’s blood within him, and to deprive him almost of the power of thought or expression.

“You need not repeat the words ten times over; speak out what you have to say. Why do you come now—Some fresh occasion for reproof and remonstrance?”

The tone in which this was uttered was bitter in the extreme.

“I come here to beg—no, not to beg; that would imply that I think the man in the wrong, and I know he is not in the wrong. I come here—to ask—to inquire—to know—no—no—to beg—to say—the gamekeeper is as innocent as the child unborn of what took place this morning, sir, and you will not surely punish him?”

“Just what I expected,” said the father, with the same immovable expression of countenance, and making as if he would return to his writing again; “I may not even discharge one of my own servants, it seems, but I am to be exposed to this insolent interference.”

“Insolent interference!—what words!” cried Edwin, passionately, and approaching near to his father. “Insolent interference! What terms!—Can I, then, be expected, basely and meanly, to stand by in silence and see a poor man unjustly punished for my fault, and I not interfere?—Not to presume to interfere? To be called insolent, because I dare to interfere?—The yoke of a Bey of Tunis were freedom to that!”

“Stand back, sir; don’t come so near. Do you mean to threaten,—to strike your father with that uplifted voice and arm?”

“Threaten! — Strike!” cried Edwin, turning pale, and shuddering, — “Good God of heaven! is it come to this?”

“Come to this! It is for me to ask, is it come to this? Stand back, sir! I repeat. Keep your distance, sir! I say.”

There was something dreadful in the father’s eye. The son saw it,—but though shocked, he could not be daunted.

“Father, you treat me with the cruelest injustice,” he cried, passionately;—“you know, or you ought to know, that never son loved more,—desired to perform his

duty more,—than I have done. Oh! if it were but permitted,—if you would but suffer me.”

“Suffer you!—Your duty to a Bey of Tunis!—Your lips homage and true service, forsooth!—Yes, suffer you,—on condition of your being allowed to say what you like, do as you please, regulate every thought and action. Homage! duty! I’ll none of it.”

“Oh, why—why—will you thus persist in representing things? Why will you be so barbarously unjust to yourself and to me? Yes, father!”—fronting his father’s bloodshot eye with one steady, bright, and clear as that of an angel; “though I am your son, speak the truth I must and will! The moment is critical and demands it. Yes, father! you are unjust to me and you know it.—You are wilfully unjust to me, and you allow yourself in it.—You know I do not desire to presume. You know I do not wish to interfere . . . but there are moments when a man has no choice left. Between punishment and innocence—between might and right—between the oppressor and the oppressed—

between the eagle and the lamb—who must not, who would not interfere?”

“Very well, sir, go on;” falling back in his chair, his pen still in his hand. “Go on, sir.”

“I have said.”

“Yes, you have said,” replied Randal scornfully; “true, you *have* said,—but is this all? Have you nothing more to say,—nothing more to urge? Is this all you have to say in the cause of the oppressed—of the innocent, the lamb—against the tyrant and oppressor?”

“Oh! sir, sir, forgive me! I know not well what I say. I came here for one purpose, and for one purpose only—to intercede—to entreat—to represent—in favour of a poor man who has incurred your displeasure—and most undeservedly—for a fault which is mine. You may be angry, father—you may frown as you do now—terribly, terribly!” he cried, with an accent of despair; “but consider, sir; put yourself in my place, sir; could you—would you—stand by and allow a thing like this? Could you—would you—stand by and see a poor fellow ruined, and

you the cause,—and not speak? . . . If your eye could strike me dead at your feet, I must do it.”

Strange passions, like clouds and brightness alternating on a wild and stormy day, coursed each other over the father’s face. But the evil demon triumphed, — the demon which drives us in the frenzied moment to actions which all after life regrets in tears of blood, but never can atone for. His bad angel seemed impelling him — forcing him — to the miserable course he pursued.

“Go on! go on! or have you anything more to say?”—he kept repeating in a manner so dreadfully stinging as nearly to drive the young man, already fearfully excited, beside himself. “Anything more to bring forward, to prove the infinite inferiority of the father, and the transcendent worth of the son?—I really am, or ought to be, particularly obliged to you, for the pains you take, in what, I fear, may prove a somewhat too late education. —But go on, sir!—go on—Anything more to say?”

“Father, you are wrong,—you are barbarous,—you try me beyond my strength. There is something of yourself in me. I”

“I am sorry for that. Anything of mine, did you say, in you?—That is unlucky, indeed.”

“Oh, father !”

“Something of mine in you!—That will justify a good deal of misconduct, doubtless.”

“Oh, father ! father !”

“And why keep repeating this baaing cry of ‘Father ! Father !’” exclaimed Mr. Langford, rising from his seat in terrible rage, because this pathetic cry from the heart was responded to by a feeling within his own, to which he would not yield. “Why go on, calling ‘Father ! Father !’ to a man who is no father to you—never was, never will be anything in your eyes but a gloomy, inexorable tyrant?”

“Oh don’t ! don’t !” was all Edwin could keep repeating.

“I know it, Edwin ; I have long known it, long suspected, long believed it. You have lived too much with those

Wharncliffes. I have let you see too much of those detested Wharncliffes. They hate me, and I always have hated them. You have been fostered in their sentiments, and you detest and despise me as they do."

"Oh! sir, how can you? Who hates, — who despises you! — who can, — who dare?"

"All can,—all dare,—my own son can, and does!"—and, with a look of anguish inexpressible, he sank back again into his seat from which he had started.

The passion had exhausted itself. He seemed relenting. Edwin was again approaching him with a deprecating look; but the very look of deprecation seemed to arouse fresh jealousy and suspicion. It was not deprecation he wanted, it was love—and love uses not the form of deprecation,—love casts out fear. Alas! poor man.

"Oh, sir! — oh, father! be just, be reasonable. Only listen to me for one moment. I never, so help me heaven above! — never — never . . ."

"Swear not. Don't call heaven down to

witness. Impiety to your earthly father is enough—Don't defy heaven," starting up and sitting erect in his chair; from which he did not, however, rise.

"What must I say—what must I do?"

"Just what you please,—exactly what you please,—say and do as you like. It is my part, or at least I am under the necessity, to submit to it."

"Oh! if you would but understand—if I might but explain . . ."

"I do understand—and I want, and will listen to, no explanations."

Here there was a pause. Had Edwin done wisely, he would now have left the room, and given his father time to recollect himself; but to do this, and his errand as regarded Greenlow unaccomplished, was what he felt that he neither could nor would. But it would have been better, far better, to have paused a few hours; for his own temper was beginning to give way, and it was evident that his father had entirely lost all self-control.

Randal kept eyeing his son with that look of fierce, concentrated rage which is seen when a man summons all his

energies to give the death-blow. Edwin was beginning to feel sullen. The injustice of the father was working its effect upon the son. There was a something dogged and determined at once, in his look.

They were both silent, eyeing each other in this way for some moments. Edwin it was who spoke first. His tone was cool and resolute.

“Before I leave the room, and perhaps the house, I must accomplish, if possible, what I came about. Sir, I beg of you to reverse your unjust sentence against Greenlow, and let your vengeance fall alone upon me.”

“Then if it were the last word I ever spoke,” cried the father, gnashing his teeth, “it should be to refuse your request. Were my proceeding the most unjust and unrighteous in the world, rather than reverse it to please you, I would go to hell !”

“Enough !—enough !” shouted Edwin, casting up his arms, and uttering a passionate cry. “Enough ! — Enough ! You have said enough ! Crush him,—oppress him,—ruin him,—do what you will,

for I have done; and if it were the last word I ever spoke, it should be this,—that I will shelter whom you render roofless!—I will support whom you oppress!—I will deliver whom you would destroy!”—and he rushed out of the room, and out of the house.

The father remained there confounded. Moved, melted, half-relenting, wounded to the quick. The passionate cry of his son,—the look, as he cast up his arms in wild despair,—had suddenly recalled other cries, other looks, to which they bore but too sad a resemblance.

His mother!—Yes the memory of his mother pleaded for him. He looked so like that mother. But, what was that mother? Had not she, too, outraged, betrayed, and deceived him,—despised his love in secret, and given that heart he would willingly have died to win, to another? And was it not the same story again?

The son!—the son whom he in secret worshipped, adored; the very idol of his heart; the son he loved with a love pass-

ing the love of women ; was it not the same thing ? Did *he* not openly insult him and fly in the face of his authority ; condemn his principles and outrage his feelings ? And was it like a son to do this—his son !—was he his son ? No, he was a Wharncliffe every inch of him,—a hated Wharncliffe. One of those soft, fair-haired, beautiful, false-hearted Wharncliffes. What had he to do with his dark haggard father ? What sympathy had he with the ravens of Ravenscliffe ?

Little did he think that under the now deserted tree,—where still the ravens haunted and builded, but where, since Eleanor's death, no trim hand of gardener had been allowed to come and desecrate the forlorn and desert spot ; where the grass grew wild and thick, and neglected brambles scrambled and flaunted—little did he think, in that forsaken spot, that spot, where in his gloomy and most sullen moments he loved to go alone, to listen to the croak of the ravens, and recall the fearful night, when the darkness of the grave settled over his soul—little did he think that there was one, fair-

haired though he might be, with the bright eyes and beauteous features of another race—but still his son—a son of Ravenscliffe — Little did he think that at this very moment, that boy—that son—was sitting under the lonely tree, listening to the ominous croak of the ravens, his hands over his face and tears streaming from his eyes, tears of regret and remorse for what he had said and done, horror at the thought that he had quarrelled with his father. Yes, it was a quarrel. Edwin understood his father but too well. After such a scene, it would be impossible to meet again, till some explanations had been exchanged.

The evening had been shutting in some time, and the west was gloomily overcast with heavy black clouds, under which a deep blood-coloured sheet of light was alone visible. The lengthened shadows fell heavy upon the grass, and the stillness of night was gradually stealing round.

The great heavy dinner-bell began to ring, to sound through the rocks and woods. This aroused him. Return to the house he could not under present circumstances,

—and whither should he go? To the keeper's lodge, he thought, and announce to him the tidings of his ill-success, and prepare him for the worst,—and then! Whither next?

He knew not, and he cared not.

He rose from his seat under the oak-tree, and, through the darkness now creeping over the thick solitudes of the woods, he made his way to poor Greenlow's habitation. He entered it, and found the keeper and his wife sitting very disconsolately by the embers of a wood-fire, though it was a summer evening,—for they were chilly, because they felt very low and miserable.

“Bless me!” cried the good woman, starting up as Edwin opened the door, “if there ben't Mr. Edwin. Come in, sir. Why it's past the hall dinner-time. Brought my poor Greenlow here good news, I do hope, sir?”—offering him her chair as she spoke.

He took it, sat down, and holding out his hand to the keeper, said,

“My poor fellow, we must all bear what it pleases God to send.”

“ I understand you, sir—my master—master no longer—the squire—Mr. Langford—it was as I said.”

“ Yes.”

“ But I hope—I hope—I ask your pardon, sir ; but I hope you have not got into any trouble, yourself, anent of your goodness and feeling for me.”

“ It is not your fault, Greenlow, if I have. Don't trouble yourself about me. Whatever happens, the blame is mine, and I must dree my doom ; but as for you, you are innocent. I am sorry my father cannot see it so, but I do ; and so long as I remain upon earth, you shall never be without a friend—or want for anything, my poor fellow.”

“ A letter, and, I declare, in Edwin's hand. Oh, ho ! he's beginning to be tired, it seems, of playing the voluntary exile.”

She turned it and twisted it in her fingers, and looked at the superscription, and at the thin paper of the envelope ; and began to put it near her eyes, and to peep in at the corners.

“What are you doing, mamma?” cried a sharp, rough voice at her elbow.

“Doing, you little impertinent thing! What’s that to you?”

“That’s a letter from Edwin.”

“How do you know that?”

“I heard you say so.”

“And where have you been all this time? I thought you were bird-nesting, or at some rude tom-boy sports,” said the mother, contemptuously.

“Only at the top of the cherry-tree, in the middle of the garden; and oh! mamma, you cannot think how delightful it was.”

“Well, you are not at the top of the cherry-tree now; and as, I will be bound for it, you have not one of your lessons ready for Miss Singleton—you may as well set about them at once.”

“Yes, mamma, I am going; but first,” taking her mother’s hand, and looking at her in her most beseeching manner, “do pray tell me what’s the matter about Edwin, and where he really is? Papa looked dreadful when I asked *him*. And, is that letter really from him?—and when

is he coming home? Do let me take it to papa, if it's for him, pray do."

"Nonsense; hold your tongue; go to your lessons, and don't be troublesome. I shall take the letter to your father myself. Do you hear?—Go to your lessons; leave the room, and shut the door."

Which command Emma most slowly and unwillingly obeyed.

Mrs. Langford stood still for some time, holding the letter, turning it round and round in her hands, and vainly endeavouring to divine its contents. Should she deliver it? Should she suppress it altogether—that was the question. The last alternative Miss Emma's unlucky presence seemed to have rendered dangerous—nay, impossible. And yet the letter might be a submissive one, and pave the way to a reconciliation. Delivered, however, upon reflection it would seem that it must be. Turn the matter as she would in her thoughts, no other conclusion could be arrived at. She was resolved, however, to deliver it herself. She should then be able to watch its effects, and perhaps ward off its consequences. She therefore entered

Randal Langford's study, holding the letter in her hand, and, putting on her most amiable smile, she said,—

“My dearest Mr. Langford, I have something for you which I hope and trust will give you pleasure—a letter from your son.”

“Which son?”

“Not from poor Priest. Poor boy! he knows his letters only bother you. He does not presume to write to you. He writes to me.”

“Presume! Why should not Priest presume! He's a very well-behaved lad, that I must say; and I am not sorry, now and then, to hear from him.”

“Indeed! Do you say so? I will make my poor boy happy with the intelligence; and he will write to you, be sure of it. Too proud of the privilege; for though, perhaps, it is not for me to say it, he has a heart to love and respect you thoroughly. But then, he is as like you as it is possible to be; and where there is a strong resemblance, there is usually a hidden sympathy.”

“You said you had a letter for me;

from . . . the other, I conclude, as it is not from Priest?—Give it me, if you please.”

He tried to keep his hand steady as he took it, but it *would* shake. He broke open the seal. He cast his eyes over the paper, but a dimness came over them, and he could not read.

“ Shall I ? ” officiously put forward Mrs. Langford.

“ No ; give me my spectacles. I think I grow old. Pshaw ! be quiet ; stand out of the light ; I can’t see.”

“ My dear Father,

“ I wish I could say that I think myself in the wrong. I wish I could say, that upon reflection I repent my interference, and acknowledge the justice of your sentence against Greenlow—this I cannot do. The poor fellow is in the greatest distress. I did not think a man of his stamp could have taken a matter of this sort so to heart—but he so loves the place ! He has lived here, serving you and my grandfather, man and boy, fifty years. Sir, it is like uprooting an old

tree. Do what you will, it will never flourish again. May I beg, may I supplicate you — on my knees I could almost do it — to reinstate the poor old man? As for myself, I most humbly beg your pardon, and most deeply regret everything in my manner that was offensive and irritating; and though I cannot acknowledge myself wrong in the object of my interference, I beg and entreat you to forgive all that was wrong in the manner of it. May I venture to come home? If I do, may I hope you will receive me kindly? Otherwise, I would rather go to the antipodes at once."

"Let him go to the antipodes, then!" exclaimed Mrs. Langford, who had ventured so far as to read this letter over her husband's shoulder; "for such a letter *I* never read from son to father before. Did one ever see such obstinacy?"

"I will trouble you, Madam, not to read my letters over my shoulder," folding it up and putting it into his pocket.

"I beg your pardon, I am sure; I thought in matters such as these, *I* at

least was privileged to share your confidence. The peace of all of us, depending as it does upon a general good understanding, I did not expect to be excluded from a matter which so nearly concerned me."

"Concerns you! And how, may I beg leave to ask, does it concern you?"

"Edwin does not love me, but I love him."

"You do! You give frequent proofs of it."

"I give the best proofs of it."

"As how?"

"By endeavouring to teach him what he owes to you. Yes, Mr. Langford," she went on, "you may think of me as you please. A too great knowledge of mankind has taught you, perhaps, an unjust suspicion; but I am a mere child of simplicity and country breeding. I am neither of a jealous nor suspicious temper. Nevertheless, I cannot altogether shut my eyes, and I really cannot help seeing that Edwin's rebellious temper is a source of continual misery to others, and of vexation to himself also. But he has not

naturally a bad heart, and if the Wharn-cliffes have instilled certain high-flying notions into him, it is not his fault. It might have been better if you had trusted the training of him to the influences of home, as was done with poor Priest—but you know best.”

“Probably — and,” fixing his stern piercing eye upon her, “what is the plain English of this discourse? I wish you would tell me what you intend by it. It would save me a world of trouble in endeavouring to make it out, which I protest I know not how to do.”

“Mean!—Intend!—what I say—that I love Edwin, and regret that he does not give *you* more cause to entertain the same partiality. You do not like him,—it is not to be wondered at; but if you knew him as well as I do, you would find that he had qualities irresistibly formed to rivet the affections.”

“Really—I should—you think so?”

“Indeed, and indeed I do. Don’t be angry with me for pleading his cause. Who can be happy and see father and son divided?”

“I thought you wanted just now to send him to the antipodes?”

“Forgive me, I was hasty—I confess I was vexed at the tone of the letter.”

“I find nothing to quarrel with in the tone of the letter.”

“You don’t!—Oh, forgive me; forget what I said. You find nothing to quarrel with in the tone of the letter! Burn it, then, at once, without re-reading it. I beg you, Mr. Langford, for the sake of your own peace of mind, to do so. Reinstate this tiresome gamekeeper, who is setting your son against you, and let us have Edwin back again upon any terms.”

Once more the dark penetrating eye glanced at her, as if it would pierce into her very soul.

“This is your advice, is it, Madam?”

“My most serious, my most earnest advice. I would add, my most fervent prayer—But you are proof against prayers. Let there be an end of this, Mr. Langford, I beseech you, for your own sake. Reinstate the gamekeeper. Yield up this matter to your son. Recollect he is your eldest son—your heir! Young men in such

a position, do and will expect to have their wishes consulted."

"You think so? Yes, you are right. No doubt they do."

"And we must, we must give way a little to the natural course of things. 'Tis vain to resist it—vain as the endeavour to arrest the course of the sun."

"Vain as the endeavour to arrest the course of the declining sun, when the meridian is past.—I understand you, Madam—But it was not indelicately expressed."

"I mean for the best, I am sure."

"Yes, I believe you do—but I am unreasonable with you at times."

"Oh, I never think of that And you will, then, write to Edwin—tell him that you yield the point that he makes such a fuss about? That you reinstate the favourite, and therefore hope all may be forgotten, and that he will come home as usual again?"

"I'll see him damned first."

Mrs. Langford looked excessively shocked. She started, and managed to turn pale.

"My dear Mr. Langford—My dear husband!——"

“Say no more—say no more—You are too good to an ungrateful boy. This is more than I can tell you he would do for you. When you and I happen to be of contrary opinions, ten thousand to one but he takes my part. The only time when I am in the right is when I oppose you, it seems. Say no more—Every word you utter in his behalf only seems to increase my irritation against him.”

He looked at her again suspiciously, but she assumed a countenance of the utmost candour.

Mr. Langford, penetrating as he was, felt puzzled. He could not, and he did not, believe in the sincerity of the attachment his wife professed for Edwin; yet he thought it good-natured of her to say so much. He took out the letter again, and began slowly to unfold it.

“You shall *not*!—No, that you shall not do,” said she playfully, snatching it from him, and tearing it into atoms in an instant, she pushed the fragments into the grate, which was laid for a fire.

“Mrs. Langford!” he cried, pale with passion.

“ I see—I see you are excessively angry ; but forgive me?—I could not, dare not, let you read that letter again. There was something in his way of making terms—of proposing the conditions upon which he would return, and—and—really it quite looked so—like forgive *you*, that I am positive I did right in not letting you read it again. You may be angry, I see you are, very angry, but I can bear it in a good cause.”

CHAPTER V.

. Upon the pillars of the temple laid
His desperate hands, and in its overthrow
Destroyed himself.

LONGFELLOW.

MRS. LANGFORD had left the room. Randal Langford took his hat and stick, upon which—old before his years, worn down by the conflict of ungentle passions—he was forced to lean. His was not an uncommon case.

It is lamentable—it is grievous—one of the great evils under the sun—is perversion of character. In my opinion, almost all faulty—almost all criminal characters, are but perverted ones. There is not only the mystery of original sin, for which most are but too ready to look—

to be found—but the image of God exists, however defaced, in every one. If, instead of busying ourselves so much in punishing, in order to the correction of faults—we were to give half our attention to the discovering and developing of good qualities—I believe our moral education would produce far less unsatisfactory results than it at present does.

We ought to have more faith in human nature. Faith, in itself, moves mountains; and the very confidence in the existence of good qualities, would often call them into action.

Randal Langford possessed the rudiments of some of the finest qualities which can dignify man,—intense sensibility, unswerving truth, and the strongest sense of justice. But his sensibility was perverted into susceptibility, and a fearful resentment of wrong—his love of truth, into harsh judgments as to the truth in others—his love of justice, into severity. To the good qualities above-reckoned might have been added, a very refined perception of moral beauty. Circumstances had perverted it into complete misanthropy;

and the most contemptuous scorn for those who fell short of his ideal standard.

Christianity, true Christianity, understood as it ought to be understood—drawn pure and uncorrupted from that spring of livingwaters—the lips of the Divine Teacher himself, would have afforded the remedy for this. But Randal Langford, like too many in this world, was a Christian but in name. The ray Divine penetrated not in its strength to warm, or animate his heart. His place was still, in fact,—whatever his profession might be—among those in the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

He was at this moment in a state of the greatest disturbance, and his whole mind at war with itself; and he sallied forth to seek the solitude of his own dark woods, and there alone, and unassisted, struggle with the demon within, and endeavour to reduce the internal conflict to order.

His wife had asserted that he did not love his son. Had she spoken the truth? Ah, no! When every trembling pulse within bore testimony to the agony, the

anguish with which he dwelt upon the image of that fair boy estranged.

Ah, yes! When the burning brow, the livid cheek, pale with anger—when thirsting to inflict punishment, he cared not what, so that he could but make the daring rebel feel the full weight of that power which he had defied—gave evidence of feelings too near akin to hatred.

His pride, too—that dreadful and all-dominant passion of his soul—was all in arms. His paternal pride and sense of dignity only the more revolted; because in his heart he felt and knew that all this time he was yearning to clasp the rebel to his heart, forgive him, and indulge him in everything.

So thus torn and agitated by conflicting wishes and feelings, he went forth to be alone. He felt he must be alone—but not that he might coolly reflect upon what had passed—not to judge himself and others fairly, and examine what justice and family peace required—but rather that he might be at liberty to give full vent to the tempest which was raging within his soul.

Randal Langford passed in general for

a man of the coldest temperament, equally unassailable by passion or imagination. Yet, perhaps, to few minds did the real impression of facts come more distorted by those two magical influences than to his. And at this moment both imagination and passion were completely in the ascendant.

Instead of thinking of Edwin as he really was—generous, benevolent, right-minded, yet young and therefore rash and positive, and, in spite of his affection, prone to and fond of resistance—he saw in him a bright, transcendent being, too brilliant to harmonise with his own darkened self, and using his faculties but to overbear and insult the gloomy deformities of his father's character. Between beings so opposed, he felt as if there could be no true sympathy—that his son was no true son of his, but the child of another race. Of the fair-haired, cold-hearted, arrogant, defiant Wharncloffes—That the creature he so doted on was his own and not his own—his son, yet no child of his—inimical, anti-pathetical, opposed by every instinct, rebellious, indifferent, and unkind.

The son for him was Priest—the dark-

haired, dark-browed Priest, the quiet, subservient, well-behaved Priest, who thought as he thought, said as he said, did as he would have him—not the bright blue-eyed angel, who seemed only formed to contradict and censure.

They were only pictures of the imagination that his mind thus kept presenting during this solitary walk of his in the damp melancholy woods. But fallacies or not, they produced the effect of truth, and as he held these figures up in strong contrast to each other, unrighteous and unnatural desire began to arise of humbling the one by unreasonably exalting the other. Exalt the one he neither loved nor esteemed, in order to humble that other whom he worshipped.

There was a momentary feeling of self-gratulation in the idea that he had *two* sons—that Edwin was not everything, and that through Priest he might be made to feel what it was to incur his father's displeasure. That he might thus be reached if he continued to absent himself, and refuse to return except upon conditions which Randal Langford was resolved never to

grant. Alas ! this was the effect produced by the reflections of that solitary walk, upon the man abandoned to himself; ending in only a more concentrated displeasure, and a stronger determination to hold down Edwin's favourite. He might have forgiven Greenlow, and probably would have done, but for this.

He returned to his study a more implacable man than he left it, sat down to his desk, and took up his pen to write. Edwin's letter, unfortunately, was destroyed, he could not refer to it again; and the impression it had made was confused. Was it as insolent as Mrs. Langford had represented it to be?—Were the terms so injurious?—Was the impression it had made upon her a just one? Her perceptions were not very fine, but they were usually accurate enough; but she did not love his son. Her husband was well aware of that, let what might be her professions. One thing, however, was not to be forgotten—Edwin had endeavoured to impose conditions as the price of his return to duty, and at that thought all the pride of the man and the parent was aroused. Under

the influence of this feeling he took up his pen—his words were few, and were these :

MR. LANGFORD TO EDWIN.

“ I submit to no conditions. It is not my habit to receive them from any man, least of all from my son. What I did I conceived to be necessary to the due maintenance of my own dignity and that of the law. You thought differently, and flew in the face of my authority, and for this I expect an apology. When you think proper to make one, and to fulfil the part of a son by supporting instead of opposing my determinations, I shall be happy to see you occupying your place again as my eldest born. Until that time, the less we see of each other the better.

“ Go and do what you please. I send you an order upon my banker, which will give you the means of associating with those more congenial to you.

“ RANDAL LANGFORD.”

EDWIN TO HIS FATHER.

“ SIR, — Do I understand you right? Is the condition of my restoration to your

favour to be the performance of the basest of actions on my part?—In other words, am I to abandon the cause of a man who has suffered through my fault, and my fault alone? Impossible!”

“No—I shall not write again.”

“Do not disturb yourself—all will be right at last. This is but the natural obstinacy of youth; spoiled, perhaps, by a little too much admiration and indulgence. Believe me, Edwin will think better of this. Shall I write?—Shall I endeavour to bring him to a sense of his mistakes?—To show him, that in thus upholding a discharged servant, he is striking at the foundation of all domestic order? And that it is—could he but see it in its true light—neither more nor less than a grievous insult to the man for whom nature and reason claim obedience and respect—namely, his father?”

“Write what you will, Madam—Yes, write! But, for the love of heaven, *say* no more! . . . Oh, why—why!—mother!

—son!—all—all! Yes—write, Madam; bring him to reason—a third person can often set things in a just light. But, hearken!—no concessions. Nothing that can lessen the dignity a father ought to maintain in his son's eyes. But you will not be severe? . . . gentleness—nay, nay; say what you think best.

“Depend upon me; and——”

But, in much agitation, Randal Langford had already left the room.

Mrs. Langford sat down at her husband's desk; she folded her paper, and pressed down the folds with the ivory knife which lay by; she took a pen, dipped it in the ink, shook it, and examined it, rested her head upon her hand, reflected, and finally decided upon writing what follows.

The expression of her countenance was singular, whilst she was thus employed—complacent, yet hesitating. What was passing in her mind was equally so. Those spirits within—which seem to hold colloquy with each other, questioning and answering—were then in high dispute. The one accusing—though not with all

the decision and authority it ought to have done—accusing, and demanding satisfaction—and the other evading, and palliating, and disguising the truth in every possible manner ; whilst the woman—the soul, the creature, the third—in this mysterious argument—was accepting the subtleties of the last, and, as far as in her lay, stifling the remonstrances of the first.

She was saying it *was* better, as one voice urged—to separate father and son for a time—better for both ; and she was obstinately shutting her ears to the other voice, which kept crying out, “ Falsehood and lies ! You know it is only better for yourself and Priest. Speak out !—You know what advantage you intend to take of this absence ;” and the other answered, “ I am sure I mean to take no advantage at all. How should I ?—What is *Priest* to get by it ?”

“ Get by it ! Look into your own heart,” the voice responded, with a scornful laugh—and then was silent ; and Mrs. Langford wrote her letter.

MRS. LANGFORD TO EDWIN.

“MY DEAREST EDWIN,—What shall I say, or how begin this painful missive? My dear son,—for may I not call you so? how could you write such a letter to your father? A most kind and indulgent father, as you well, by experience, know; yet, one who never did and never will yield a point—least of all to a son like you, and standing in your position. For human nature will be human nature, and, since the world began, so it has ever been. Men may love their sons, but they never entirely love their heirs. There is always a something—a jealousy, shall I venture to call it? You are waxing, whilst they are declining; and who loves to decline?—who loves to be pushed downwards?—who wishes well to the man between whom and his possessions he stands? Therefore, allow me to say, my dearest Edwin, that you do very imprudently indeed, in thus thrusting yourself forward, and interfering between your father and the objects of his displeasure. Depend upon it, he sees it, and can only see it,

in one light—as a proof of an impatient desire to wield the sceptre whilst he is still living—virtually to depose him, and to reign in his stead. I see it as it is, believe me, dearest Edwin—I know this proceeds only from the generous hastiness of your disposition; but it is in vain that I urge this. Your father's bent is peculiar; and, indeed, *you*, of all people, should beware of provoking his anger. It may seem indelicate in me to allude to it—but, your poor mother's story! There is a secret ill-will—there must be—Your very face,—every gesture, as I am told your tone of voice—everything.

“It has often been hinted to me, by your friends, that it would be better if you were less here; but I could not endure the thoughts of conveying the hint to you. Contribute to the separation of father and son! Anything first! I thought it best to let matters take their course, hoping all would end for the best, and that you would come to a mutual good understanding.

“Little did I anticipate this sad, sad scene.

“ I cannot disguise from you that your father is very, very angry. I own, I dread a meeting under such circumstances. You are both warm—things might be said—things even done! Oh, Edwin! I have known shocking histories of this description, where things have passed, that could never, never be forgotten. No, my dear, I am inclined to give you the advice which the mother, in Scripture, gives her son.

“ ‘ Now, therefore, my son, obey my voice: and arise, flee thou to Laban, my brother in Haran; and tarry with him a few days, until thy father’s fury turn away; until thy father’s anger turn away from thee, and he forget what thou hast done unto him.’

“ In cases like these, I think distance is a great object—distance softens matters in itself. But then I would *not* advise your going to Lidcote Hall, for to be frank with you—and you see, my dear, I am *very* frank with you—your father does not love you the better for your predilections in favour of that place. He cannot forget that your mother was a daughter of their house, nor the behaviour of her friends,

especially of her brother, Colonel Wharncliffe, upon the occasion of her unfortunate death. One thing he loves not in you, is your affection for them. I think it would irritate and offend him very much if you were to take refuge there ; he would look upon it as a fresh act of defiance, I am certain. Take my advice. It is that of a true friend—for that I am, dearest Edwin. I have a brother in Ireland. Adopt the advice of Scripture literally. What can you do better ? Ireland is quite a new country to you ; I have often heard you confess a wish to visit it.—(She did not think proper to remind him that as often as that wish had been expressed, it had met with the most determined opposition upon the part of his father.)—Go there, and tarry a while, till I recall you ; which will be, I trust, speedily. I know how it will be when you are gone ; your father will be uneasy. The seas have to be crossed,—Ireland is in a very restless and unquiet state. These things make a parent anxious, and revive the father in the heart. Your mind, in the meantime, will be enlarged and interested by the new

scenes you will visit,—and when you take your seat in Parliament, as I trust you shortly shall, you will be prepared to assist in legislating upon very important questions, about which I have heard you express yourself with much feeling scores of times. I own the brother, to whom I would recommend you, does not fill a very high position in society,—being only agent for a gentleman now abroad, who has come in as remote heir to some very fine estates in the south-western part of the country; but you will find yourself as comfortable with him, as people can expect to be in Ireland, for he is very well to do in the world, and will be enchanted to receive any one coming from his poor sister; who since her elevation, as he might consider it, has been a good deal parted from her own family. And she has, my dearest Edwin, to tell you a little secret, to its full extent experienced, how cold are those upper regions to which, in our ambition, we desire to soar. This is a long letter, and I fear will worry you. I am a woman, and therefore use many words. It is the fault of our sex; but

what I say is well meant, and so far, at least, deserves your attentive consideration. I repeat it,—depend upon it, in cases of family misunderstanding,—not to say secret jealousy and ill-will, there is nothing so useful as absence.

“I am,

“My dearest Edwin,

“Ever most sincerely and affectionately,

“Your Mother,—sweet name,

“RACHEL LANGFORD.”

The letter inclosed one addressed to the brother.

Edwin read this long effusion with mixed feelings. He was deeply hurt that his father had delegated the task of writing to another, and that other, a mother who was not a mother. There was something undefinable about Mrs. Langford that seemed to force people into jealousy and distrust. Edwin knew, by a sort of secret instinct, what his father's hidden opinion of his wife was; and in it he fully shared.

This silent sympathy had been as a secret bond between them,—and now it

embittered the feeling of alienation to find himself thus turned over, as it were, to her.

No measure that his father could possibly have taken would more have wounded or offended Edwin, than thus to close the door to personal communication and make this insinuating, this distrusted, this incomprehensible woman, the medium between them. Yet he seemed equally destined to be the victim of that blind infatuation, which, whilst it distrusts the the adviser, adopts the advice. Jealous as they were of her intentions—both suffered themselves to be influenced by those insinuations, so inartificially shrouded under her exaggerated professions of affection.

Edwin had observed his father's ill-humour and indisposition to the subject, whenever he had mentioned his wish to visit Ireland; yet now he suffered himself to be persuaded that it was a mere vague and passing feeling, and there was nothing better to be done. Convinced as he was that Mrs. Langford, whatever she might pretend, had taken no really affectionate

interest in his welfare, and that her advice was in all probability dictated by the desire to have Ravenscliffe and its master to herself, yet he yielded to her representations — Her reasoning, he admitted, was good, whatever her motives might be.

He felt, indeed, in an awkward dilemma. Greenlow he would not abandon; upon that he was resolved. This resolution might be said to be composed of ninety-nine parts good feeling, and one part obstinacy. Edwin had a slight touch of the father in him, after all. He was determined not to rest till he had compensated the poor fellow by establishing him in a good place, let his father be displeased or not. And here he hoped the matter would end. Impressions wear out where there is nothing to revive them. His object effected, the subject would naturally die away. He would go to Ireland; from thence he would in due course of time write again to his father, and endeavour to mollify him. In a little time his own feelings of vexation would have subsided—he would be able to write with a more proper humility

and submission than he now found it possible to do. He should by this means get permission to return home, and then all, he trusted, would be as usual.

Having therefore succeeded, through the means of Everard Wharnccliffe, in procuring a good place for Greenlow,—which was no less a one than that of gamekeeper upon one of the estates of his grandfather, Sir John,—he started for Ireland; and did not write again to his father—a grievous error, of which he too late understood the ill consequences.

CHAPTER VI.

Gone to be married?—Gone to swear a peace?

KING JOHN.

“GONE to Ireland!—Actually gone! And without one line to account for his continued absence! or give his reasons for taking this incomprehensible step! The very one which, as he knows, I should have been most opposed to!—You don’t tell me so, Mrs. Langford?”

“Yes, he is gone. He started by the mail to Holyhead on Tuesday, after having spent two days at Lidcote Hall—to which place he was accompanied by Greenlow.”

“And has he taken Greenlow with him to Ireland?”

“No. Colonel Wharncliffe has given him the gamekeeper’s place at Solliwold Wood, in Lancashire,—an estate of Sir John’s. It is an excellent place, they say, much better even than yours. Very good keeper’s house, good wages, and various advantages besides. I knew Edwin would never rest till he had contrived this.—So like him!”

Mr. Langford said nothing.

“I don’t think myself it is a very good thing to be so busy providing other people’s discharged servants with places. But Edwin, it seems, is of a different opinion.—Mistaken, I think; but mistaken or not, we know his heart is in the right place, and what he does is always well meant.”

“Possibly—yes—no doubt. Everybody concludes, at least, as to the excellence of their own motives.”

“I don’t say—I don’t intend to say, when I affirm that his heart is in the right place,—there may not be a little pride,—a little spirit of opposition in what Edwin does.”

“This going to Ireland, for instance!

I would have rather he had gone to the antipodes—as I think you once proposed, Madam—than to Ireland.”

“Have patience with him, my dear Mr. Langford; recollect how young he is, after all.—And then, did you ever formally express any dislike to his going to Ireland?”

“I care not whether I did or did not express it.—Will you be so very kind, Mrs. Langford, as to leave me and my room to ourselves?—I am ill at ease—I would rather be alone.”

The lady understood, and left him.

It is a beautiful night, starlight, and a crescent moon, and white fleecy clouds are softly sailing before a gentle breeze across the sky; and the brown bosom of the woods is chequered with the silvery light, which falls upon the herbs and flowers, steeping their innocent nodding heads in the moonbeam. And the stillness and repose are profound, for it is past midnight; and the silence is only broken now and then by the distant roll

of some cart upon a far road, or a dog aroused and yelping at a great distance, or the dreary cry of the screech-owl, or the hum of the night-hawk as it comes sailing past.

A man is walking slowly along, among those loved, those adored scenes,—looking round wistfully from time to time, as if taking a long leave of the beloved place. He makes his way by the chequered pathway, over which the gently-heaving branches are playing, and comes to the side of the dimpling pools of the river, in which the crescent moon and stars are shining reflected—and there he stands, gazing with a melancholy pleasure, as the flowing water breaks over the pebbles, and gently steals away.

Then he turns, and looks up at the house above—every window closed, every light extinguished. Long his eye is fixed upon that particular window,—the low window that overlooks the precipice, and which is now his father's room; but there is no light shining there. Then he slowly ascends the path which leads to that side of the house, and he stands and

looks up; and his heart yearns to his father, and to the place,—the house and the trees, and the rocks, and the water; for everything is very dear.

He stands there long, listening, with a sort of vague hope that his father, who is a restless sleeper, may perhaps come to his window, open it, and look out upon the night, as he is often known to do; but no father appears.

At last, in despair, he abandons the spot, and walks round the house,—all so deathlike still,—and goes round by the old tower and to the raven's-oak; and there, quite overcome, he flings himself with his face to the earth, and passionately kisses the ground, and tears up some of the rough grass, and thrusts it into his bosom; and then he once more returns,—again stands gazing upwards in front of his father's window. All silent and still. At last he turns, and slowly and unwillingly goes away.

Oh! that these two hearts—the one wistfully gazing upwards, the other tossing in anguish upon a restless pillow, fevered with irritation, yet agonizing with

love—could have been brought together !
Oh ! for the blessed peace-maker to heal
their misunderstandings ! Blessed, thrice
blessed are the peace-makers, in every
situation of humanity ; but blessed above
all are the family peace-makers !

CHAPTER VII.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew ;
She dwelt on a wide moor—
The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door !

WORDSWORTH.

THERE were other members of Randal Langford's family who must not altogether be forgotten : there were the son and daughter by the second marriage—Priest and Emma.

Priest is not at present at home ; he is residing with a private tutor, preparatory to entering the University. We shall become better acquainted with him by-and-by.

But I must not altogether overlook the one who seems to be overlooked by everyone else,—who is one of those children whom one sometimes sees altogether ne-

glected, and considered of little account in a family ; yet who flourish in perfection, nevertheless, like some wild bird of the woods, or unnoticed flower in the wilderness, the spontaneous growth of nature.

Emma had not been treated with actual unkindness, but she had been the object of little care or affection, and consequently left very much to herself and the chapter of accidents. The attention and solicitude of the parents seemed absorbed by the two boys; and this little dark-eyed, rosy, round cheeked creature, with an excellent natural constitution, cheerful spirits, and a certain native wildness — almost roughness — of manners, gifted with the most courageous and enterprising temper, and an inexhaustible faculty of self-amusement and self-employment, seemed to get on extremely well.

For many years she had been the spoiled darling of an affectionate old nurse, and under her mild sway had enjoyed all that liberty so dear to a clever, active child ; though the good woman, as far as her learning went, did not fail to give her various acquirements, and to thus accustom her to a certain degree of discipline.

Those things which good Smithers, according to her view, considered it essential that a young lady should possess, Smithers took care Miss Emma should not want; and being a superior woman in her own class, she was quite capable of playing the then unrecognised part of nursery-governess. She taught Emma to read, and she had taught her to write and cast accounts. Emma read every book that came in her way, wrote letters in play to unknown correspondents, and went as far, and was ready to go much farther, in the mysteries of summing, than her present instructress was able to accompany her.

But as there were not hours upon hours of practising upon the piano-forte to be done, nor unintelligible grammars to be stuffed by rote into the head—six languages besides her own not being at that time deemed essential—her studies occupied very little of her time; and Emma, free as a bird of the air or fawn of the woods, grew up, as I said, nearly as wild, and, as some thought, quite as charming.

Her summers were passed mostly, out of doors, in scouring over the country with her

brothers, when they chanced to be at home, upon a rough Shetland pony—one of her few proper possessions. When the boys were away, most often she might be found perched upon the rocking branches of a favourite cherry-tree, where an accidental peculiarity of growth had formed for her at once a seat and a bower,—reading one of her favourite books, or sitting hours together, gazing from her leafy chamber over the beautiful scene around her, lost in her own teeming thoughts and reflections.

In winter, her time was chiefly spent sitting on a low stool by Smithers, at the nursery fire, reading; or, her elbow on her knee, her cheek resting upon her hand, looking into the fire—her creative imagination forming all sorts of wild and beautiful pictures therein,—demoniacal caverns, and rocks where dragons and genii haunted, and the lovely, golden, glowing abodes of fairies and salamanders! For her studies, though they had not been very extensive, had been among the most imaginative, and the books she possessed were indeed become her own—grafted into her

mind, until they were in a manner part of herself.

Her childish library had consisted of "Thalaba," to which I have just alluded; the new "Robinson Crusoe," in dialogue,—a book no longer to be met with, but which formed the delight of children in her day; "Sandford and Merton," "Evenings at Home," Enfield's "Speaker," and "Exercises;" and what she prized far, far more than all these, which she had begun to read as soon as she could put words together, continued to read aloud to Mrs. Smithers, as a little girl, every day of her life, and read, studied, loved, and formed herself upon, to the latest hour of her existence—her Bible! The books she read were, as all books, indeed, more or less are, the expression of the time to which she belonged. It was a trying, striving, earnest time. Men had suddenly, as it were, been seized with a sort of passionate disgust against the trammels of conventional life as it then existed, and with an almost equally passionate desire after the freedom of truth and nature. All established things were brought suddenly to the test,—to be tested

by these two standards alone—whether it was natural to man, and whether it was necessary to man, by the standards of nature and necessity? Men have discovered since, that these two do not comprise the whole of the facts. That there is something in the human being which requires to be corrected, as well as to be cherished; that there is much inherent power of development, which the life—free unshackled life of nature as it was called—never will call forth. That the human soul, and its relations, is a very complex and mysterious thing; and that the above systems, unless taken in a very large sense indeed, will produce a most crippled and imperfect result. Still the mistake was a noble one.

This pursuit of simplicity, of truth—of the useful, and the real—this sudden crusade against the false, the pretended, the empty, the vain—destroyed much that was shallow, much that was vicious, much that was barbarous, much that was wretched.

A certain generous fervour, and a noble contempt of show and luxury; a disdain of all that was false, of *shows*, was the charac-

teristic of that day. And if people were a little worse dressed, a little less courteous in their manners, and in some danger of forgetting that fine flower of conventional courtesy, of which the French nobility formed so brilliant an example, let it be forgiven by the present more polished generation, in favour of the vast clearance then made of old trammels—and the *champ rasé* which the efforts of the eighteenth century produced for the nineteenth to work upon.

Emma's studies had been, as her list of books will show, those peculiar especially to her day. Contempt of luxury and show; all sorts of reasons against the thirst for gold—to which such a strange power, *as* gold, was in those days attributed—disdain of the general usages of society, which certainly were, at that time, in many ways, both absurd and vicious; and a sort of deification of nature, and the life of nature, were the topics upon which they chiefly ran. And Emma, in the sincerity of her heart, learned from "Robinson Crusoe," to adore the independence of the desert; from "Sandford and Merton," to abhor fine gentlemen

and ladies ; from “Thalaba,” that self-sacrifice alone constituted the hero; from “Evenings at Home,” a simplicity of taste, and a love of the just and the truthful.—These all combining with one of the most fearless and generous tempers in the world—produced a being whose frank and open brow, clear and ardent eye, free gestures, and fearless assertion of her sentiments, added to a torn frock, too often entangled hair, and tanned face, rendered interesting, yet to many, unpleasing.

Randal remembered the soft and fair-haired being, whom alone upon this earth he had either loved or admired, and took very little notice of this rough, bonny girl. The mother was far too much occupied with her endeavours to obtain that influence and supremacy to which a most ambitious temper inclined her, to trouble herself with a member of the family who could not be called a piece in her game. She loved the child well enough, for no one could help loving Emma ; but thought very little about her.

As for Emma herself, her mother was one, that except in the mere way of na-

tural child's affection, she could neither love, nor sympathize with.

From a child she, in an obscure manner, instinctively distrusted and disliked her mother's modes of proceeding — *instinctively*, from a child. Neither did she love Priest much, though he was the brother with whom she had been principally brought up,—he being, however, three years older than herself — but she was not without her strong partialities. She nourished in secret, the deepest reverence and the most intense interest for her dark and lofty father; and a something approaching to idolatry for the fair-haired Edwin, whom she looked upon as a being belonging to another world. As the impersonation of those bright images of moral and personal beauty, which floated vaguely in her fancy. However, she saw very little of him, for he was five or six years older than herself, and his childhood and his boyish years had been spent so much with the Wharncloffes, and away from Ravenscliffe, that she had never become thoroughly and intimately acquainted with him. She gazed at him with love and

admiration, and a certain awe, as from a distance ; for there had been nothing in the rough, rosy, little Tom-boy of a girl, to particularly please Edwin's taste, or engage much of his affection.

So, poor child, she was left very much to herself, and to her worthy, ignorant nurse, and to her books. The most of them, if they teach us much that is true, are in danger (unless corrected by a comparison with reality) to instil much that is false, and cannot alone form the mind and moral habits, as those of such a being ought to be formed. Will she, too, run out of the course, and go astray, in her blindness, as all the rest of them are doing ? Perhaps deviate still further than any of them into eccentricity, if not into vice ? No ; she is safe. There is One who feeds His flock like a shepherd, and gathers the lambs under His arm, and gently leads those who are with young.

His teachings, intelligible to the youngest child, surpass the mental range of the wisest and the most enlightened man. They combine that simplicity, that truth, that disdain of the false, the showy, the

mere external life of things, which approved themselves so powerfully to her mind—with a something soft, courteous; a perfection, if I may presume to say so, of good taste and good sense, which invariably softened and melted down the ruder asperities of her character.

All blended in one by that fine solvent of *love*, which seemed to be nourished within her heart, whilst she sat at the feet of her benign Master—in fancy, listening to His words—in fancy, following Him through His toil and sufferings; in fancy, kneeling with those women at the foot of His cross, and learning from Him to be meek and gentle of heart, and to find rest unto her soul.

Thus she grew, no one knew how, like the flower of the field, under the sweet dew from heaven; and she learned to love and to feel for everything that breathed.

Such was Emma Langford. Her influence might, indeed, have been most precious in this distracted family; but she is not suffered to use it. She is set aside as a thing apart; and whilst all is

anguish and heart-burning, and bitter resentment—cruel, disappointed, unchastened love—or miserable selfish calculations around her—she sits in her cherry-tree, hovering between earth and heaven, gently rocked by the morning breeze. Whilst the leaves are rustling round her head, and the sun as he majestically rises pours his shining effulgence over the wide landscape of woods and hills that spread before her, and she listens to the morning voices of the birds, ignorant of the discord that is going on.

Happy and peaceful in the solitary sphere she occupies, as yet a stranger to disquiet and dissension—she sits; and her book is open before her, and she reads of Him who turned to the lilies of the field, and asked whether Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these—and who said, “If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you?”

And thus her heart expands, her intellect expands, and her countenance expands; and the whole creature becomes,

in a certain sense, transfigured under such noble influences.

Woe—woe—to those who endeavour to raise the demon-mist of doubts and hesitations—and all the darkness of confused and impure metaphysical sophistry—between the longing eye and the light and promise divine!

Woe—woe—to those who call evil good and good evil, put darkness for light—and substitute a future of cold, endless, purposeless death—for the life glad and eternal.

We shall have something more to see of Emma; I now return to Edwin.

We left him turning away from Ravenscliffe, the place he loved with an affection so intense, and with a sore and wounded heart, breaking asunder the ties which bound him to the father he loved yet more intensely. Smitten, as it were, with a curse he understood not exactly how or why, and driven from his father's presence, and the explanation he so longed for, and the reconciliation he so yearned

to effect unaccomplished. And, now, in utter despair of doing better, he prepares to shape his course, under the influence of what was in truth, alas! his evil genius, to that very country of all in the world where it would most vex and displease his father to have him go.

But even had he been more fully aware of this, it would not have availed; Edwin was sorely wounded by his father's conduct; and he was now in a mood to care little what he did, or what became of him. His temperament was in some things unfortunate. One which involves in itself almost the fatality of evil. He was ardent, fervent, and spirited, but there was that tendency to sudden re-action which is the bane of some characters. He was liable, upon any reverse of circumstances, yet more smarting under any wound received in his feelings, to sink into the most reckless despondency. He was, but under a more amiable form, what his father was, what they all of them were,—the sport of undisciplined feeling, good or bad.

No consistency, no moral discipline, no strength in their weakness derived from

the Divine Ruler. In the course of justice or benevolence, who so fervid, so indefatigable, so daring as Edwin?—but, under the pressure of disappointment who so easily discouraged? The hard eye of unkindness he could not stand—injustice from those he loved he could not brook. He became at once disheartened, hopeless, reckless, indifferent; he had not the eye of faith—all was given up for lost. He cared not what he did, or what he said—nay, at times he seemed to take a sort of despairing pleasure in defying and exasperating the ill-fortune of which he thought himself undeservedly the object.

The more he loved, the more his feelings were excited, the more certain were these effects to ensue; and there was, doubtless, much of this mistaken feeling as regarded his father on the resolution he adopted to follow Mrs. Langford's advice, and set forward for Ireland.

CHAPTER VIII.

Parted, parted, ever parted !
Said and said the words have been ;
Yet I hear them, broken-hearted,
As in wonder what they mean.

W. C. BENNETT.

It was a beautiful summer morning, when, after a short and prosperous passage from Liverpool, under a favourable wind, the vessel upon whose deck Edwin Langford was standing, entered the transcendantly beautiful bay of Dublin, and approached the then flourishing capital of a torn, agonized, and distracted country.

Not yet, indeed, had the hidden fire burst forth,—or, at least, had only given evidence of its existence by occasional flashes of fitful flame : but it was smouldering beneath ; and society in this unhappy

and fated island seemed trembling at its foundations. For why?

Because everybody was wretched. Injustice,—the miserable legacy of ages of misrule and oppression,—stalked over the land, equally to the misery of the oppressed and of the oppressors; causing despondency, degradation, and envious hatred on the one side; and distrust, jealousy, and ill-disguised terror upon the other. Tyrant or slave—Protestant ascendancy or Catholic degradation—Orange or Green—it was all one. Both parties were in a false position, and both parties were miserable. A fierce Rebellion terminated in a hastily-cemented Union; but evil in this case laid the foundation for the first step towards a better system of things.

An awful famine appears the herald of a real regeneration. Oh! may all men aspire, with honest purposes of heart, to render this promise of avail.

The Protestant has become benevolent and tolerant; may the Catholic become faithful and sincere,—and all will go well!

Edwin landed in the beautiful city, and

devoted a few days to the examination of its buildings, and of the fine, wild Phoenix-park, of well-known celebrity, which I shall not stay to descant upon; then travelling through that line of the country so graphically described by Lady Morgan, in one of her Irish novels, and which description I should vainly attempt to emulate, he made his way to that remote corner of the county of Kerry, where the estate he purposed to visit was situated.

How beautifully does Lady Morgan picture the wild sea-coast, lashed by the waves of the ever-restless Atlantic,—those desolate mountains, bogs, and glens—and all the dreary and all the interesting scenery of the land she loves so well! I should but have to copy her book to give you a far better idea than I am capable of conveying, of that part of Ireland where Edwin found himself, after a journey which had exercised his every faculty, and excited his feelings in a remarkable manner.

Those were days, indeed, of suffering and oppression, of mistaken principles

of government, of religious animosity, of smouldering discontent and hidden treason. One vast system of partiality and misrule on the one side—its counterpart upon the other being the web of a vast conspiracy, which extended nearly throughout the whole kingdom. Religious fanaticism, carried to the highest pitch of exasperation, upon both sides, adding its fuel to political discontent — aided by vain theories of the perfectibility of man, of universal equality, and universal virtue—which disguised the wild hopes, the lawless ambitions, and the miserable deceptions of those days.

The face of the country as he travelled through it might be more wild in its aspect; but the real misery could not have exceeded, scarcely equalled, that which we have seen lately. But the deep feeling of injury, and the bitter animosity,—that something obscure and ill-defined, but yet intelligible to the attentive observer,—which might be read under the lowering brows of a semi-barbarous peasantry, we will hope and believe, has been gradually clearing away under a milder and juster rule than at that time obtained.

For indeed, whatever may have been the mistakes committed,—of the fervent and sincere desire upon the part of the Government and people of England to aid and benefit the poor suffering Sister, no Irishman can in his heart at this time doubt.

Edwin found Mr. Grogan, to whom he had been recommended, living in a very remote western corner of the county of Kerry. He was, as has been said, a brother of Mrs. Langford, and was now—singular coincidence of circumstances!—agent upon that very estate, which, by his marriage with Miss Vernor, had come into the possession of Marcus Fitzroy, Lord Lisburn. However, upon the death of that young lady some two or three years after her marriage, leaving only an infant daughter, the property had, by the provisions of a somewhat capricious entail,—reverted to the heir-male—a distant relation at this time living upon the continent.

The conjunction was ominous. Far more ominous than even Mrs. Langford had contemplated, when she gave to her

step-son the treacherous counsel to leave Ravenscliffe and visit Ireland. She only thought still further to offend and alienate his father. Little did she even divine the mischiefs that were preparing.

I shall not pause to describe either Mr. Mrs. or the three Miss Grogans, their household habits; their manners, their views, or their prejudices, for time presses—there is much left to relate, and space runs short.

Suffice it to say there was nothing to be found in-doors to wile away a time which Edwin found most tedious and irksome. He was divided between his tormenting regrets and questionings as to the course which had been pursued, and the yearnings and longings of his heart after one beloved and alienated,—with alternations of grief and anger at injustice received, and the most aching hungry appetite for news.

Mrs. Langford had promised to write and inform him of the first favourable change in his father's dispositions towards him; but oh! the wearisome posts of those days! The length of time it would

take before a letter could reach him in this remote corner of the empire.

At times he bitterly repented that he had suffered himself to be persuaded to leave England at all. At others rejoiced in the hope that his father would interpret this step justly, consider it—as in truth it was—only an additional proof of the intolerable pain his severity had occasioned, and yearn to meet and to be reconciled as much as he did himself.

And did he not?

Was not this true?

Did not that heart; that heart capable of such intense affections—such agonizing sufferings, in its tenderness or in its rage—yearn after this son—this being so loved—so jealously—so strangely—so *angrily* loved?—That it did.

Randal Langford was a miserable man. Dissatisfied with himself, but deeply wounded at the conduct of his son, which, alas! he misinterpreted altogether, and there was no one at hand to give the right reading.

Except, indeed, Emma. But Emma had been treated as no child of his.

Emma had never been caressed, never fondled, never, as a little one been drawn near to her father's heart, there to establish that fond association of love and intimacy, which colours and endears every future year.

The reserved and distant,—the cold, haughty father had never stooped to notice the little, round-faced, rosy, dark-eyed child. She had much of the mother's family in her, as he thought—her mother's family was as dusky as herself. She had none of the gentle delicacy that he loved. But he was mistaken as to the source from whence the shade arose,—it was the reflex of his own face, and of his own better self, that was there.

Ever since Edwin's departure, Emma had become thoughtful and moody ; but nobody cared enough about her to notice the change. They were all too much occupied with their own designs or disappointments, their own hopes or their own sufferings to think of her, who obtruded her emotions upon no one. At the top of her cherry-tree she sat and

thought; and the book which lay open upon her lap was seldom looked into. She mused—she endeavoured to understand. She longed—earnestly longed to be allowed to remedy. She was one of those, whose mission in this world it seems to be to set wrong right. To make the crooked straight and the rough places plain. She was, indeed, formed for the work, by the singleness of her heart, the purity of her aspirations, the almost rugged simplicity of her habits, the abnegation of all that corrupts or enervates in this world. Well prepared was she for the generous office, but as yet unsummoned by occasion.

She could only think and grieve; only gaze upon the stern, but melancholy expression of her father's face with anxious sympathy; and with a sort of instinctive jealousy watch the wily eye of her mother. Something was very much amiss, —so much she had gathered. Edwin was gone,—and gone, lying under his father's heavy displeasure.

All this was a sore grief to her. What could Edwin possibly have done—Edwin,

who was so gentle, so good, so reasonable, so ready to stand the friend of everybody? At length she gleaned something of the story of the gamekeeper; and of how Edwin had withstood his father in his rage, and endeavoured to ward off a heavy punishment from the man. Then she, who knew them all pretty well, began to comprehend how it must have been; and that her father had been enraged, and that Edwin had been perhaps too warm. He was warm; but who did not love him the better for it?

She would have accused her father of harshness, cruelty, injustice, had she not watched and understood, by a sort of natural sympathy, that face which was like a sealed book to all beside. In that countenance *she* could read how deeply he had been moved, how miserable he was—and find a touch of that affecting sorrow which is inflicted by a thankless child. A thankless child Edwin never was—never could be. But might he not have appeared so—have said something—done something?

She looked in her father's face, and

longed to plead and to explain ; but she had never been accustomed even to address him when unaddressed herself. He was to her like some sovereign far removed in rank and dignity, to whom she could not speak first. And in his gloomy sadness, if possible, he seemed still further removed from her.

But why this long misunderstanding ? Why did two people who loved each other as this father and this son did, continue alienated ? That was the vexed and perpetually recurring question. Then her attention was again directed to her mother. Was there anything to excite distrust of her ? Edwin, it was true, was now rarely mentioned by Mrs. Langford ; but when she did speak of him, it was in such terms that, if any one could, in Emma's opinion, have loved or valued Edwin too much, Mrs. Langford surely did. She could not help remarking and regretting that, when her mother spoke of him at rare intervals to his father, making use of these exaggerated expressions, it did no good—rather harm.

Why could not her mother observe this herself? This, at least, she might venture to point out, and she resolved to do it.

The mother and daughter were sitting by the fire together after a long walk with Mr. Langford, in which some allusion to Edwin had been made. Mrs. Langford had, as usual, been loud in her lamentations over his absence, and her declarations had not been few upon the subject of the dulness and uninterestingness of life and of Ravenscliffe when he was no longer there. These things being interspersed, as such discourse usually was, with the most elaborate encomiums upon the charms of his conversation and character.

The father had listened with an expression of disgustful impatience upon his face, succeeded by suspicious and almost sarcastic glances at Mrs. Langford; finally his whole countenance had darkened, and, as if the conversation was become utterly unbearable, he had suddenly walked away.

Mrs. Langford and Emma had returned to the house. It was now autumn and a

chill gloomy day, and they sat by the fire together.

“Mamma,” Emma began, “I want to say something.”

“Say away, child, but don’t be very long; for I want to write to Priest by this post. Poor Priest! I hope he will be at home by the end of the week at farthest.”

“I shall not be long, mamma; what I want to ask is,—why do you never praise Priest to papa in the way you do Edwin?”

“Why?—why?—what do you ask for, child? I should think your own sense might tell you. Edwin is my step-son, Priest my own son. The praises of Edwin are graceful and proper from my lips, those of poor dear Priest might seem selfish on my part.”

“Must one praise people, then, not because they deserve it—not because one wishes to serve them—but because it is becoming to oneself so to do? That seems such an odd reason for praising other people.”

“Nonsense, Emma! How strangely you have learned lately to talk—A sort of

way of drawing inferences, making distinctions, and splitting hairs, which I don't understand and don't approve."

"I don't mean to split hairs, I am sure—but what I was thinking of was this.—If people intend to do the absent a service by their praises, they should not *over-praise* them."

"And pray, Miss, what may be the drift of that wise saw, now?"

"Why, mamma, the drift is, that I don't think you are aware that you do Edwin no good at all by your way of speaking of him, and I wish . . ."

"My way of speaking of him!—And you wish! I'll tell you what, Emma, it's quite enough to have one child set himself up as censor in a family. See what Edwin has got by it; and if you mean to attempt to play the same part by me, I promise you I shall make shorter work of it than your father did, and order you to hold your tongue, and keep your opinions to yourself."

"You don't understand, mamma. I did not mean to blame—only to remark—that if you really wish to serve Edwin, I

am certain as can be that you are not taking the right way."

"Really mean! What do you intend by that insinuation, Miss Emma?" cried Mrs. Langford, colouring scarlet with rage or with something else.

Emma was silent. She would not give utterance to what she really *did* mean. She would have been glad to have forgotten it herself. After a little time she began again, half as if talking to herself,—

"I wonder why Edwin went to Ireland? Mamma, do you know it puts me in mind of what I was reading in the 'History of England' to Miss Singleton only yesterday—it struck through me like a sword as I read it. Do you remember that charming but faulty Earl of Essex, that the old queen was so doatingly fond of? They got him sent to Ireland, the people about her did. And then—and then—oh! they had it all their own way when his back was turned—and only think how dreadfully it all ended!"

"I am no learned lady like you, Miss Emma—and I have quite business enough to do in attending to my house and my

own concerns, without troubling myself with the history of an old musty queen—who's been dead, I'll be bound, this five hundred years or more."

Emma sighed and looked down, and said,—

"The history's frightfully like, though."

"Well, it may be, for all I care.—But what's that to me? All I know is, that Edwin was a great fool to quarrel with his father in this way,—taking part with a good-for-nothing servant,—a thing no master of a family can or ought to bear—I am sure I wouldn't—And then he flies the house, and leaves it to me to patch and make the matter up as best I can—and what to do I am sure I don't know, for your father is terribly exasperated—he grows less and less reasonable every day, and it will soon be impossible to manage him, I foresee. And what are we all to do? for his temper . . ."

"Pray don't, mamma,—pray don't,—papa looks so unhappy."

"Yes, he *is* unhappy; unhappy enough—every one is who is vexed with disobedient and disrespectful children. And as for that,

I should have cause to be unhappy enough myself, too, if it were not for the consolation I found in my dearest Priest."

To this Emma likewise made no reply. It was her way to let matters drop when they had proceeded thus far. By-and-by she got up as if to go and take off her bonnet, but her conscience smote her as she did so. She had not half effected her purpose; she had not succeeded in persuading her mother to alter her method in advocating the cause of the absent.

Emma was indefatigable in her endeavours to serve those whom she thought in danger of being unjustly treated. She possessed a most persevering character, and could not bear to leave anything half done; so she controlled her temper, which was a little raised by Mrs. Langford's last speech, and stopped and said: "Well, I must go and take off my bonnet, and get to my French lessons; but, mamma, before I go away, like a very good girl as I am—do tell me what is to be done to get Edwin back from Ireland again? Do not let poor Essex languish in exile, and all sorts of evil feelings be

nourished against him—*Les absens ont toujours tort.*”

“Now you are at me with your French, Miss Emma. You seem delighted to insult me by showing off your fine education.—Girls did not receive such in my days. We had little of your French, and Queen Elizabeths, but we honoured our parents, nevertheless, and did not sit perched half the day in cherry-trees.”

“Dear me, how unlucky I am this morning!” said Emma good-humouredly to herself; then to her mother, “Mamma, I beg your pardon; I really do so wish to say what I want to say in the way you would like, if I knew but how. What is to be done to get Edwin home again?”

“I am sure I don’t know,” said Mrs. Langford, impatiently rising, and preparing to quit the room; “I do and say all I can; perhaps you had better try your hand, and speak to your father yourself.”

“Shall I? May I? Yes, I will——”

But her mother had left the room.

CHAPTER IX.

Yet were her thoughts of him! and at times a feeling of sadness
Pass'd o'er her soul as the sailing shade of clouds in the moon-
light.

LONGFELLOW.

RANDAL LANGFORD was alone, sitting by the drawing-room fire, in a huge arm-chair, his own peculiar seat. He was dressed for dinner, for he had changed his dress when he came in from his walk, the first bell had not however yet rang, and Mrs. Langford was in her dressing-room. He sat there, with the newspaper hanging idly in his hand, not reading,—not, perhaps, properly thinking,—Suffering. The door opened softly, and a young face appeared at it, but the noise made was not loud enough to attract his attention,

and he did not even turn his head that way. The figure of a young girl was seen entering the room, looking forward in a fearful, hesitating manner, and she held a beautiful nosegay of autumn flowers in her hand. She advanced a few steps, then she stopped, looked wistfully at the dark melancholy figure seated by the fire, then advanced a few paces more—paused again—and thus advancing, hesitating, and pausing, at last forced herself close by her father's chair.

“Papa!” said a timid voice.

“What do you want, Emma? Is it you? Why do you come creeping in in that manner? I hate it,—you startle me. Cannot you open the door and come in at once? You do not use to be so creep-mouse in your ways. Well! what do you keep standing there for?”

“Papa, I had gathered a few flowers; I thought, perhaps——”

“I hate flowers; lay them upon the table. Nay,” as she turned away, “let me look at them, my little Emma. Did you gather them for me?”—taking hold of her arm, and turning round to him

the disappointed face.—“I may hate flowers, but I don't hate kindness, Emma.”

The expressive countenance brightened up in a moment. Were these the first words approaching to true sympathy or feeling that this child had ever heard from her father? I fear so. She did not know what to say, for her heart was full—big with the purpose she had in view, and swelling at the unexpected tenderness of her father's last sentence.

He continued to hold her arm and to look at her. She stood there with her head a little bent down, and her eyes fixed upon the flowers.

“You got them for me, did you, little girl? They are pretty flowers, but they are wasted upon me—my life has not been one of flowers. Keep them for yourself, my dear—May they be more in accordance with your fate!”

“Oh! papa”

“You have something you want to say to me, Emma.—Do you know, my dear, we are almost strangers, and I begin to think it is time we should be better acquainted?”

You look as if there was something in you, my little Emma, after all."

He had, indeed, lately been now and then struck with certain anxious, observant looks upon her part, which had excited his curiosity.

"Have you anything to ask—any favour to beg?" he went on, as he saw the colour slowly rising to her dark cheek, and a look of much feeling in her downcast eyes; "speak, my dear. I shall be glad to do anything which can give you pleasure."

"Oh, papa!" and she turned her eyes full upon him.

There was something most peculiar in the lifting up and flashing of those eyes upon you. The effect for the moment was almost irresistible. They seemed, as it were, to flash light upon the very heart. For the first time in his life he began to perceive that this was no common child.

"Speak," he said, "for those eyes of yours are full of meaning; but I do not know you well enough, Emma, to expound it."

“Papa, it’s because I am afraid—because I do not know whether I ought or dare venture—Edwin”

He let fall her arm suddenly, and said, “No, indeed! Neither ought, nor dare—No one shall dare mention *that* name to me.”

She stood petrified, as one whose hopes, whose endeavours are at once annihilated, and the little edifice of future good falls a heap of blackened ashes at his feet. She dared not speak—she dared not move—she dared scarcely breathe. She was astounded at her own temerity, but more so at the violent emotion, the sort of mental agony, with which the terrible sentence had been uttered.

He had now turned himself quite away. His back was towards her; his face was covered with his hand.

She stood there, reluctant to go, hesitating whether to stay, in terrified perplexity; and he sat there, it seemed to her an age, still covering his face with his hand. At last the hand sunk from the forehead,—he slowly fell backwards in his chair, and seeing her still standing by his side, said, with a sort of melan-

choly dignity, which affected her very much—

“Emma, you are young, and you have yet to learn how rash and unfeeling it is to intrude unsummoned into the sanctuary of a man’s heart. You do not know—and God grant that you never may know!—the cruel power of certain names and associations. You should not have mentioned your brother to me in that abrupt manner; but I am certain you were not aware of what you were about. Go away now. Don’t vex yourself, my dear”—seeing her look perfectly confounded—“it is over—Only don’t do it again, Emma.” And taking up the newspaper, he bent down his head, and seemed endeavouring to read it by the light of the fire.

Poor Emma retreated in silence. Bitterly disappointed and cut to the heart at the idea, that not only had her present attempt at interference proved utterly vain, but that any future endeavour of the same kind was now impossible. She went up into her own room, laid her flowers upon the table, and—a rare thing for her—cried very much.

The next event which happened was the arrival of Priest. If Emma had been not greatly to her father's taste, Priest was still less so and with better reason.

He was unamiable, slow, formal, conceited, and heavy,—and, oh! the fatality of human things, when governed by human passion, and ill-regulated inclination alone,—the luckless Randal Langford was thus, through the effects of his own undisciplined character, deprived of the society of the child he loved—and justly loved—and given up entirely to the other.

There *is* a fatality which seems to pursue some lives,—that fatality is, I suppose, their temperament. The same story, whether of joy, or sorrow, is repeated over and over again in a life of any length,—for the predominating genius of the tale, alas! is the same. How few are changed, amended, or corrected by experience! As it had been with Randal Langford in a still tenderer relation,—so it was now.

The woman he adored had been sacrificed to the intemperate fury of unjust jealousy and suspicion,—and of that more

delicate distrust of the power of inspiring affection, which is too often the painful attendant of sincere and strong affections in gloomy and misanthropical characters.

The woman he adored had fallen a victim to the violence of malignant passions, whose source was in the sincerest devotion, and a love unparalleled,—and another, unamiable, uncongenial, unloved, unhonoured, had taken the place by his side. And so it was to be in this present relation of parent and children. The son he loved with a partiality approaching to idolatry, and who so sincerely returned his affection, had been banished,—and all through a mistaken jealousy of authority, aggravated by the consciousness of his hidden weakness. And now, in place of the true-hearted, spirited, and offending Edwin, he must fain make himself content with that other son,—the quiet, unoffending, obsequious, uninteresting Priest.

Priest was a sallow, dark young man, very thin and sinewy in form,—and of a saturnine and serious cast of countenance. His hair was inky black, and cut very close

to his head ; for it was of that bristly nature which seems to refuse itself to every other form of *coiffure* except this most unpleasing one. His motions were slow and deliberate ; his speech, tardy but correct ; his words, few but well chosen ; his voice, low, deep, and false. There was nothing spontaneous about him, all was deliberate and measured, in accent as in gesture. He was the very reverse of the ardent Emma, in temper and disposition ; and as for his brother Edwin, it was impossible for two men, standing in so near a relationship, to be more totally and radically unlike.

But, such as he was, he had ever been the darling of his mother,—the sole object for which she lived, or much cared to live.

It is no uncommon thing to meet with characters vulgar as hers in sentiment and principle, cold in their affections, and interested in their views, thus fascinated as it were by, and centering the whole of their affection upon, one object, that object being in general, in such cases, a worthless one, and probably inferior even to themselves. With some it is a pet servant ; with others, a pet

relation; with others, a pet child, who, for some quality or other, are thus erected upon a pedestal, and every just consideration for others sacrificed at their shrine.

Mrs. Langford had chosen her son, Priest, the least amiable and valuable of her whole family, as the object of this sort of predilection; and he, being her only son, and her first-born child, it appeared to her the most just and natural thing in the world that to him such sentiments should be dedicated. It is not intended to represent her as feigning or exaggerating her affection; it was all most genuine and unaffected—doting. It had no harm in it, except that it was at once preposterous and unjust.

“Is Mr. Priest’s room quite ready for him? and have you put the eider-down quilt upon his bed, and that large pillow? I know he likes a large pillow.”

“That pillow, ma’am, was put upon master’s bed.—He complained to Withers that his pillows were too small, and he has not slept well lately.—Withers thought it might be the pillows; and he took that one large one, and master seemed to like it.”

“I am very much surprised that either you or Withers should take upon yourselves to make alterations in the beds or pillows without consulting me.—That pillow was got for Mr. Priest; he has a difficulty of breathing at night, and he wants it. Say nothing about it; Mr. Langford will never observe the difference if Withers will hold his tongue. Mr. Priest *must* have it; it is his own pillow. And the eider-down quilt—I don’t see the eider-down quilt; where is that gone, if you please?”

“I put it on Mr. Edwin’s bed.”

“And, pray, what did you put it upon Mr. Edwin’s bed for? I suppose Mr. Edwin could sleep well enough without an eider-down quilt—or was it the opinion of Withers and yourself that Mr. Edwin’s want of rest required indulgences too? Fetch it back, and lay it here; it was made for Mr. Priest.—And attend to what I say—I will have nothing whatsoever taken out of Mr. Priest’s room without my leave.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“And, Emma!—where’s Emma?—Are

you going to get any flowers to put into Priest's room?"

"I was, mamma; but it is such a horrid, cold, nasty day, that I did not venture out, for I am wrapped up for a bad cold already—so poor Priest must do without any flowers, and I don't think that he cares for them much."

"He mayn't, but I do. And I'll tell you what, Emma, I care for—that every one in the world takes a pleasure, I think, in slighting poor Priest. But, one thing I would have them to know—I consider a slight to him as a slight to me."

"Don't be angry, mamma, I am sure I intended no slight to Priest, far less to you; and I will wrap myself up, and go and gather what flowers I can find in a moment, if you think Priest will be pleased to have them; but I really think he doesn't care." And away went Emma and muffled herself up, and was opening the front-door to go into the garden, when she almost fell against her father, who was at that moment entering.

"Take care what you are about," said he, harshly.

“The wind blows so hard I could scarcely manage the door,” said she.

“And what had you to do with the door at all? I thought you had a bad cold?”

“Not very bad,” said she, pleased even at this little proof of interest, “not anything to signify.”

“It signifies so much that you had better not go out—for the wind is piercingly cold.”

“I shall only be out a few moments,” said she, and was passing on.

He was always jealous of the least contradiction from those he cared for, and he was beginning to care, in a degree, for Emma. He felt somewhat hurt and offended, and coldly said,—

“Do as you please. I wish to be a hinderance to nobody.”

“It is only to gather a few flowers for Priest’s room.”

“Priest’s room!” said he, pettishly.

“To please mamma,” she added, excusingly.

“To please mamma!” in a tone still more peevish. “Yes, I understand, Emma

—but, the wind is too cold for you. I desire you not to go out. . . .”

She looked at him wistfully, longing to comply at once, fearing to displease her mother.

“Only for five minutes?” she ventured to persist; “it can do me no harm.”

“For Priest, nothing can be too much—I suppose you make as great a fuss about *poor* Priest as your mother? Do as you like.”

“But—but papa!—if you think—if you wish——”

But he had already turned away, and had walked towards his study.

She remained standing a little while at the door, thinking what she should do—displease her mother or offend her father. Inclination pleaded for the father—a generous desire to oppose inclination and take the less pleasant part, so natural to a sincere mind, prevailed. She opened the door, rushed out, gathered what flowers she hastily could collect, and went upstairs to adorn Priest’s room with them.

She hoped, as she had not to pass the study windows, that her father would not

be aware of this little act of inattention to his care,—a care, slightly as it was expressed, so unusual and so gratifying ; but as she was hurrying up-stairs with her bundle of flowers in her hand, she unluckily came full upon him again.

He was slowly coming down.

He did not speak, just glanced at the flowers, then at Emma, and returned to his study.

There was that in his glance which brought the tears of vexation into her eyes. So provoking to have displeased him—so foolish. What was Priest—what her mothers anger compared to displeasing him — that father, that melancholy, reserved father—to her young affections such a sacred, honoured thing?

“I wish, mamma,” she said, as she came into Priest’s room, “that the flowers had been at Jericho ; for I met papa, and he was displeased at me for going out this cold day ; and oh ! *I am* so sorry.”

“And what should he be displeased for?—I am sure it was natural that a sister should take some little pleasure in giving an only brother an agreeable wel-

come home. — But your father thinks everything too good for Priest. He never considers any one but the heir.”

“Oh, mamma! Don’t say that. Poor Edwin! He is little enough considered, I am sure. This long, long exile from home — but here is the carriage, and Priest.”

The mother hurried down-stairs, and caught her darling in her arms.

“My dear son, my dear Priest! How are you? Are you tired? What a day it is! Are you cold? Come, I have a capital fire for you in the drawing-room. Run, Emma, and stir it up.”

“How do you do, dear Priest?” said Emma, before she obeyed, coming up to kiss her brother. He bent his lips to her forehead, and then saying, “It is horribly cold,” turned to his mother, and asked her what he ought to give the post-boy.

“How far have you come?”

“Nine miles, — from Scarsneck,” he said.

Then there was a long discussion between mother and son about a sixpence more or less, which the man demanded. In the middle of which the study-door

opened, and Mr. Langford entered the hall.

“What is all this about?” said he, “How do you do, Priest?” extending his hand.

“The man makes such an abominable charge, — only nine miles, — and he asks”

“He has driven the young fellow home,” said Mr. Langford; “but perhaps that is a poor reason for a largess. Pay him, Withers,” turning, with a sort of contemptuous negligence to the servant; “and Priest you go to the fire, which I hear somebody furiously stirring up for you. You look as pinched and cold as if”

The rest of the sentence was left unuttered; the father stalked away towards the drawing-room, — internally thinking, that his son looked as like a pitiful, mean, dastardly miser, as for his life he could.

Emma was busy, making the best of a fire, which, in spite of Mrs. Langford’s orders, had been overlooked, whilst she was busy in her son’s room up-stairs.

“How provoking! How excessively pro-

voking. After all the pains I took, and such a fearful cold day, too! My dearest Priest, I *am* so vexed. I assure you I have been thinking of nothing else since breakfast, but keeping a warm house for you. I knew you would come in so starved. Withers, Withers! do you hear? Do bring or send somebody with the bellows, will you? Emma, that's the way to poke it all out,—how stupid you are. Give me the poker. I declare Priest I am so vexed."

"Never mind, mother. It is not of much consequence, I can sit in my great coat till it is a little warmer," said the young man with benignant condescension.

"Pray don't vex yourself, Emma."

"Oh, I am not vexing myself."

"I should think not," said her father bluntly.

"But I am sorry you should be starved."

"There seems a mighty fuss made about your convenience, young man. I am sorry you are accustomed to such cotton-wool habits," said Mr. Langford contemptuously.

“Indeed, sir, I should be very sorry myself to have any habits that required anything out of the ordinary degree of comfort which one expects from one’s position, and so on. And I beg my mother and Emma will give themselves no further trouble. I can bear the cold I assure you all, without the least inconvenience.”

“Really!” aloud—and “What a jack-anapes!” was Randal Langford’s internal ejaculation.

Withers appeared with the bellows, a cheerful blazing fire was soon blown up—the mother drew the most comfortable arm-chair in the room towards it, in which she placed her son—not unwilling—and sat down upon a small one by his side, holding his hand and looking up at him with devouring eyes. Emma leaned silent against the other side of the chimney-piece. Mr. Langford, with an austere countenance, paced up and down the farther end of the room.

Now, what was there in this little scene so disagreeable? Why was this unaffected display of a mother’s love so displeasing?

We do look with a mixture of contempt and aversion at mankind bowing down before some hideous, deformed idol. And as Priest sat there with his lean figure, mean expression of countenance, hair cut to imitate that of an ourang-outang, with, I know not what of conscious importance in his face—accepting the almost worshipping attentions of his mother, as if merely his due—the thoughts of both Emma and her father, I fear, were taking an unpleasant turn—and they were each, perhaps, contrasting the present son and brother with that absent one, so far away.

Conceit is an odd quality. It seems to be one of the spontaneous gifts of nature—one for which we can discover no cause in education or in circumstances. Some have it, some want it. It most often appears as a sort of compensating force to atone for the want of many excellences and charms. But it is a cruel compensation. It enhances defect and deformity to an unknown degree, and with regard to some hearts, changes distaste into positive aversion.

Randal Langford was just the man

to look upon this ill-placed self-conceit with something approaching to detestation. He felt as if he almost hated his son, as he sat there with his complacent mien, spreading his hands before the fire, and talking to his mother with a certain air of condescending kindness and self-importance, which it is difficult to describe. It seemed not the result of the thoughtless conceit of presumptuous youth; it was the well-considered self-estimation of the matured man; and this very air of self-possession, this precocious maturity, probably it was, which displeased the father's taste more than all the rest.

Emma stood there, leaning her back to the chimney-piece, whilst her mother and Priest talked. Every now and then she smiled, but suddenly casting a look up at her father, her countenance changed, and she sighed.

CHAPTER X.

She saw the desperate assault
Upon that hostile castle made.

White Doe of Rylstone.

So it began, and so it went on. The self-consequence of the youth did not abate; the devotion of the mother did not diminish; the indifference of Emma did not wane; and the aversion of the father visibly increased.

Mrs Langford was in despair. She knew not what to counsel or advise her son to do, what part to play herself. She was completely at fault.

Priest, however, took his own way, placidly and perseveringly. He seemed to

have resolved upon the course to adopt, and to need neither assistance nor advice. Whether he shared in his mother's interested views, whether this placid, self-satisfied young man, under his exterior of peaceful self-complacency, concealed an inordinate ambition and most hungry avarice, it was impossible to say, the mask he chose to wear might have concealed anything. His conduct was consistent and undeviating. To his mother he manifested a most perfect gratitude and attachment, though without the least approach to warmth or tenderness; but in his quiet, self-satisfied way, his attentions were unremitting. All was so cold, you could not call him kind, but you could not deny him the praise of being assiduous.

Of Emma he took scarcely the least notice — the two were thoroughly antipathetical. Her brusque frankness, her truth and energy, assorted ill with his cautious tranquillity; she seemed to care as little for him as he did for her. When the days were fine, she retired to her cherry-tree; when bad, to her school-room,

where she amused herself with her books or in gossiping with Miss Singleton.

To his father, however, there was evidently much more thought and caution exercised on the part of Priest, than towards any one else. He seemed conscious of his father's dislike, but he took no pains to remove it. Before him he appeared to affect a respectful silence. He seldom spoke, except forced into conversation by his mother; he seemed to feel that his discourse, whatever he might say, would be unacceptable, and therefore to abstain from offering his opinions. He neither attempted to flatter his father by his subservience, nor endeavoured to win him by his attentions. He quietly left things to take their own course, as if content to be borne forward without any effort of his own, wheresoever the stream of time might carry him; and certainly, he succeeded in most carefully concealing any design, if design of any description he had. And yet there *were* indications—though so slight as almost to escape Mr. Langford's observations, sharpened as they were by his jealousy and suspicion of the interested motives of all

with whom he had to do. Indications there were, if you looked closely for them. For instance, observe him now. It is after dinner, and Mrs. Langford and Emma have retired, and the father and son are sitting opposite one another, at a small table, before the fire; for cold weather is come. Upon the table the wine and the dessert are placed.

“Help yourself,” says the father.

And the son fills his glass, or rather, does not fill it, one-third.

The father observes this, but takes no notice.

“Help yourself.”

The temperate indulgence is not even repeated.”

“Thank you, sir. Enough,” says Priest.

“You do not love wine?”

“No, sir; not particularly.”

“In wine there is truth.”

“And disguising,” adds Priest.

“You mean it disguises a man. In one sense true—in another it betrays him.”

“Granted—When there is anything to betray.”

“And who has not something to betray?”

“Who, indeed?”

“Who, indeed? Have you, for instance, that you so carefully abstain?”

“I hope not, sir.”

“You are faultless, then?”

“It is my humble endeavour——”

“And your successful endeavour, I conclude you mean me to understand?”

“I must not say that, sir.”

“No, indeed; I should think not.”

“We all require indulgence,” said Priest,—“and none more than myself, I am sure.”

“I wish to Heaven! I could for one moment believe you thought so,” cried the father, impatiently.

The son looked hurt, and answered not. The father scanned him, looked at him as at one playing a part. Then, blaming himself for his injustice, he bent down and stirred the fire.

“Ring for more coal, Priest.”

He did so. The door opened, and the butler appeared with—

“Sir, Mr. Smithson has ridden over, and if it would not be extremely in-

convenient, begs you to allow him an interview at this moment. It is about Blair's business, he says. He is excessively sorry, but——”

“Ask him to walk in here. Stay, Priest,” as the young man motioned as if to leave the room; “you must not go.”

A look, a bright ray of pleasure shot across the young man's countenance. One grateful glance at his father, and his cold passivity returned; but the father was struck, melted, warmed by it.

Mr. Smithson entered, took a chair, and the offered glass of wine, and then the discourse upon some business of a very intricate nature began.

You should have seen Priest's face of deep attention.

Mr. Langford entered into the matter with his usual ability, comprehending all the difficulties, and with the power of a most lucid and logical mind arranging the affair as by the wand of some powerful genius of order, placing things in a clear and intelligible light at once. Presenting matters, as he did so, to the puzzled and

astonished Mr. Smithson under an aspect which he at last comprehended, and was competent to manage.

Mr. Langford was pleased, as we all are, with this triumphant exercise of his powers; and once he condescended to glance at his son, to see how he took it. His son seemed not to be in the least aware of the glance, but his countenance was all expression. There was wonder, admiration, and that sort of satisfaction which a clever man feels at seeing a thing thoroughly well done—though by another—written in it. The characters were not to be mistaken. One glance he exchanged with Mr. Smithson, which said, as plain as glance could say, Is it not most admirable?

This did not escape Randal Langford, nor was it intended it should. Even the stern, severe Randal Langford himself could not be entirely proof against such flattery.

The business was concluded, and Mr. Smithson having refused an invitation to stay to tea, upon the plea of urgent haste, withdrew. Then the two gentlemen

simultaneously arose, and put the end of their napkins into their finger-glasses; and whilst they were thus engaged refreshing their lips and hands, Mr. Langford said to his son, with more cordiality in his manner than he had as ever yet displayed,—

“That Smithson is not quite such a fool as one should at first take him to be?”

If he expected some little compliment, in return for this observation (for Randal Langford was, as I have so often told you, after all, but a man), he was doomed to be disappointed.

“I don’t think he is a fool. Slow,—and he finds it difficult to disentangle his ideas, perhaps; but give him a little time, and he reasons soundly enough.”

“You think so?”

“Yes, I thought so to-day. He seemed clear enough when the conversation ended.”

There was a slight shade of disappointment passed over Mr. Langford’s face; it was plain he expected something more,

“Well, I am glad you think so,—He

will carry the matter through, I hope, without giving me further trouble."

"I am afraid he will not do that?"

"Why, I thought you just now said you thought him competent?"

"Competent to *comprehend*,—and that is no small matter."

"Competent to no more?"

"I don't think so—If you ask my opinion, sir,—father,"—pronouncing the name of father with a certain trembling hesitation, indicative of great internal emotion. "I should say,—but you abhor flattery, and in me it would be presumptuous even to praise,—even to say what I think. My mother is waiting tea, shall I go to her sir?"

"You *are* a deep one," thought Mr. Langford to himself, as his son left the room; "but you certainly are no fool at least, and there is a certain pleasure in having a son capable of comprehension. As he says himself,—‘that is no small thing.’"

CHAPTER XI.

O radiant Time, thou com'st not back
From out the vanish'd years;
When love on wrong in thunders burst,
And pity flash'd in tears.

C. W. BENNETT.

AND all this time Edwin remained in Ireland. Mrs. Langford had promised to write to him, should any favourable change take place in his father's sentiments; and she certainly so far performed her promise as to write punctually.

But, as will easily be believed, she gave a very garbled and one-sided account. Her relations carried a perfect air of truth and simplicity,—for, in fact, they were so far consistent with the facts, that all the expressions of resentment which fell from his father, and which were most carefully

detailed, were such as actually occurred ; but then all the signs of secret relenting, of strong latent affection, which were discernible enough to any honest observer, were as carefully suppressed.

But the most insidious part of her behaviour, was the advice she persisted in giving Edwin,—not to write to his father himself ; assuring him that, in his present temper, anything he could say would only do mischief !

And woe, woe to those well-meaning, or ill-meaning, who offer the like advice,—and put themselves in the way of explanations, which almost inevitably draw alienated hearts together again.

Edwin was, on his part, greatly hurt at his father's implacability ; he felt he had not in the least deserved the treatment he met with ; and there is something in injustice that more raises and aggravates unpleasant feelings than any other form of injury. So he remained at Mr. Grogan's, partly wounded, partly sulky ; expecting, every post, some conciliatory message, — some summons home. He walked to a little obscure cluster of huts,

amidst the barren mountains, where the post-house was situated,—and which lay about four miles from Mr. Grogan's spruce, square, red-brick dwelling, — and every day in vain. For even if there were a letter, and that was rarely—the direction was still in that hand of Mrs. Langford's, which it fretted his very heart to see,—for comfort from her missives he never found.

His time, for the first few weeks, hung dreadfully heavy upon his hands. In the mornings he wandered about the mountains, or over the bogs, shooting snipes and curlews, and other denizens of these remote wilds, somewhat more rare and curious. Fortunately for himself he had some taste for natural history. The evenings he spent sitting over Mr. Grogan's turf fire, reading and re-reading the few books that gentleman possessed, or lost, in a sort of listless reverie—wondering why he was there—impatient to return home, to dare his father's anger, be it what it might—and then forcing himself to the resolution of waiting for the arrival of the next letter. But the arrival of every fresh

letter only threw him into fresh perplexity. But this state of listless indifference, was destined, sooner than he anticipated, to come to an end.

One day he had sallied forth with his gun, resolved to take an opposite direction altogether from that which he had hitherto pursued, to walk northwardly along the beach, and follow the windings of those grand and precipitous rocks which, on this side of Ireland, serve as a barrier to the Atlantic.

Nothing can be conceived more magnificent than this noble coast line, with its bold and jutting precipices—as the ocean, driven by a western wind, comes foaming and thundering against them in all its fury.

It was a wild, stormy day when Edwin undertook his expedition, and he enjoyed the scene with enthusiasm. On and on he wandered, insensible to the passage of time; his spirits exhilarated, and his heart swelling as the wild waves fell in thunders at his feet—and the rocks answered by their sullen echoes. The wind drove the clouds swiftly over his head, and the innumerable sea-birds rose as he approached, soaring with their beau-

tiful, bow-bended wings into the air ; or, skimming along the waves, dipped and rose again from the restless waters.

I lose myself, as Edwin was lost, in endeavouring to describe a scene so noble, so truly beautiful and sublime as was this.

Following the turnings and twistings of these naked and broken cliffs, he at last came to a bold point, which jutted far into the ocean ; and from which, broken by the vexed travail of ages, large masses of rock had fallen, and lay scattered upon the beach. They were covered with bunches of brown sea-tang, interspersed with sea-weeds of all the colours of the rose, and with slimy, hanging tresses of the softest emerald green. Over these he made his way with some difficulty, slipping into and floundering among countless little transparent pools, fringed with the red and yellow sea-anemones, and forming harbours for innumerable crabs, sea-insects, and shell-fish of various descriptions.

At length he doubled the point, and found himself at the entrance of a deep and well-sheltered bay ; so far sheltered, indeed, between this and a promontory

upon the opposite side, that the tumult of nature seemed suddenly lulled; and the waves, so wild and boisterous upon the other side, here ran gently rippling with a placid and soothing motion to the shore. The bay was circled round with a band of close and smooth yellow sand, above which the cliffs rose bold and precipitous, whilst crowning the rocks, opposite to those under which he stood, the towers and walls of a large, antique building, half castle, half mansion, were visible. The smooth shining sand, the tranquil beauty of the bay, tempted him onwards; and he had not proceeded far before he was aware of two gentlemen, with their backs turned towards him, who were slowly perambulating the shore.

He had rarely encountered any strangers, wearing the garb of civilised life since he had resided in this secluded district, and his attention was immediately attracted; though, he concluded, as a matter of course, that the persons before him were inhabitants of the castle he saw at a little distance.

As he approached nearer, he perceived

that one of the gentlemen, dressed in the ordinary secular habit of the period, was tall and nobly formed ; the other, wearing the garb of a Roman Catholic priest, was low, emaciated, and seemed considerably bent with age.

The one walked forward, erect, and stately ; the other with faltering footsteps by his side ; and it seemed as if the younger man restrained his own pace, to allow of his companion keeping up with him. The two were in deep conversation ; and the head of the taller man was frequently bent down, as if attentively listening to what his companion urged.

Edwin accelerated his pace and soon passed them, exchanging as he did so that salute, which it seems utterly barbarous not to offer to every fellow-creature in solitudes remote as these.

The colour of his face was heightened by his walk, and the fresh wind blew the fair hair lightly round his blooming countenance as he lifted his hat. It was singular, but it was thus when animated by the fresh air, and his own naturally sweet and cheerful expression upon his

countenance, that he most resembled his mother. But it was in her happier moods, such as we have not often seen her under.

The taller gentleman started, stood still for a moment with his eyes riveted upon his face, then instantly recovering himself, uttered a slight sigh as he returned Edwin's salute, with a something even more than the ordinary courtesy. He then turned to his companion, and resumed the conversation in which they had been engaged.

Edwin pursued his walk until he came nearly to the opposite point of the bay; but there a road up the cliff, and the elaborately ornamented iron entrance-gates indicating the neighbourhood of a gentleman's grounds, he thought he might be guilty of intrusion if he proceeded farther, and so turned round to retrace his steps.

As he did so, he of course encountered the two gentlemen again, and at a place where the slip of sand was so narrow that they had to pass very closely.

Again the large, earnest eyes of the tall stranger were fixed upon him. First he made way as if to let the young man

pass, then suddenly, as if impelled by an irresistible impulse,—he stopped, looked at him again, and addressed him with,

“ I beg your pardon, sir—but you seem to be a stranger in this part of the world, and probably have wandered with your gun farther than you intended. Houses of entertainment are not very plentiful in this neighbourhood; and it is our privilege, as it is our duty, to offer such hospitality as a wild country affords, to strangers.—I should feel very particularly happy, if you would allow me the pleasure of showing you the way to that eyrie there of mine, at the top of the rock; and offering you some slight refreshment before you resume your walk home? ”

Edwin bowed; and was not in the least inclined to reject the invitation. He felt inexplicably fascinated by the countenance and manner of the gentleman who addressed him,—and besides, it promised a change—an adventure. Here were two civilised, and, to appearance, well-educated men, whom he was invited to spend an hour with. Nothing could be more agreeable.

He answered,—

“I am exceedingly obliged to you, I am sure—and shall have the greatest pleasure in accepting your hospitality.”

The reply to this speech was such a look! A strange, bewildered look, full of emotion and astonishment. The cheek of the stranger turned suddenly pale—deadly pale, and for a moment he seemed again utterly speechless. Then, with a visible effort, he once more shook off the feeling, whatever it might be, which oppressed him, and with the ease and good-breeding of a perfect man of the world, entered into conversation with his young guest, as he accompanied him towards that part of the strand from which the winding road towards the castle ascended.

The aged priest followed in silence, from time to time looking with a sort of pleased admiration at Edwin's charming countenance, but not seeming to be the least in the world affected as his companion had been, and, indeed, still was. For as the conversation between the two proceeded certain tones and gestures seemed to affect

him in the most extraordinary manner, and in spite of the cool good-breeding he evidently strove to maintain, the stranger would start, change colour, and a strange passion would flit over his face. His very frame seemed to shake with agitation, rendered evident by the tremulous motion and twitching of his hands.

The path up the cliff was narrow, cut into steps in many places. When they arrived at it, the gentleman appeared to find it difficult to speak, for he only signed for Edwin to ascend, and to the priest to follow him; then turning abruptly away, he hurried for concealment under the rocks, and gave a few minutes to an outburst of uncontrollable emotion. This seemed to relieve him, and by the time he had rejoined the two others, who had now reached the top of the rock, his countenance had resumed its usual air of seriousness and melancholy.

“It is a wild place, you see,” he began, addressing his guest with a courteous air as they approached the gray, time-worn walls.

And now Mr. Sullivan, for he it was

opened a low-arched postern door, overhung with huge boughs of luxuriant Irish ivy, and the party entered that low cloistered passage, where we, at least, have once or twice before been.

“A mere ruin, and almost as dreary within as outside. It keeps its promise, and maintains the same character throughout. But you will not expect much luxury in the westernmost point of all Europe, which is where I believe you now about stand.”

“I am sure I am only too much obliged to you for taking me in.—And as for your castle, what a noble pile it is!”

“Or rather, has been,” put in Father Sullivan, with a sigh.

“Nothing modern, far less anything *modernised*,” said Edwin, cheerfully, “can in my opinion bear the least comparison with these relics of times so long gone by—times it is the fashion to call barbarous now-a-days,—but men were men in those times at least.”

The master of the castle, whom I may as well at once call Lord Fermanagh,—for Marcus, the present Lord Fermanagh it

was,—the master of the castle, who was walking first, marshalling the way, turned round at this speech, glanced at the kindling eye, and saying,—

“It is a refreshment to hear such sentiments, in this year of our Lord 179—,” opened the door of a large, lofty, gloomy-looking room, fitted up with the heavy magnificence of the age of Elizabeth or James the First, now all faded by time, and saying,—“Geraldine, let me introduce a stranger to you,” turned to Edwin, and begged he would consider himself at home.

A beautiful girl, of about eighteen years of age, tall, graceful, slender as a young sapling of the forest, with eyes of the finest colour and lustre—a dark, changeful grey, a face faultless in proportion and feature, and an expression of noble simplicity and dignity in her air—which those reared in a vain world of fashion rarely, if ever acquire,—rose at these words from an embroidery-frame at which she was placed, and graciously answered to Edwin’s salute. An aged lady who was sitting at her side did the same. This latter lady was dressed in the half-mourning habit of some reli-

gious order, and upon her breast there hung a golden cross, which signified that she was of dignity, and in all probability of some high community.

The aged lady had been reading, and her open book, covered with richly gilt binding, lay before her.

“Madame,” said Lord Fermanagh, —“Madame, *ma sœur*, allow me to present—Mr.——”

“Langford,” said Edwin.

“I thought so!” he rather shrieked than cried, and fell back at the name. Prepared, as he had fancied himself to hear it, he was as one suddenly struck to the heart.

Mr. Sullivan turned pale, too, and stood there scared and speechless; but the two ladies, whose faces were turned towards their guest, did not share, nor even observe the sudden consternation of the others. Madame la Chanoinesse, with a good deal of formal courtly civility of the old school, begged Edwin to take a chair, and Geraldine, having seated herself again before her embroidery-frame, opposite to the place he had taken, immediately entered

into conversation in the most unaffected and obliging manner.

Lord Fermanagh again made a desperate effort to recover himself, and coming up to his daughter, said,—

“My dear, this young gentleman has been out shooting sea-birds—since six o’clock in the morning, I believe; will you order some chocolate, or what else you can find, for him and for us?—Neither I nor Mr. Sullivan, I believe, shall be sorry to take our share.”

And the beautiful girl arose, and with the simplicity of the antique time, when the fairest of earth’s daughters, upon hospitable thoughts intent, were not ashamed to minister with their own hands to the objects of their hospitality, she left the room to give orders. Then Mr. Sullivan, whose face betrayed a strange mixture of emotions—astonishment, curiosity, and anxiety—drew his chair near to where the religious lady was sitting, and endeavoured on his side to maintain the discourse. Shielding thus the retreat of Lord Fermanagh, who seemed to find it

impossible to preserve the appearance of self-possession longer.

He had now retired into a distant corner of this gloomy room which was lighted by a large oval window, it is true, but the framework so intersected by its small hexagonal panes, as to afford a very veiled and imperfect light. Shrouded thus from observation, his hand above his eyes, so as entirely to screen their expression, he fixed them upon his guest, whose features he seemed to devour rather than study, so passionately, so intensely did he gaze.

Edwin, upon his part, felt all this, as if he was in a strange wizard-like sort of dream. The gloomy and romantic aspect of the room,—the once almost royal magnificence of its now worn and faded furniture,—the fine oriel window, with its rich and heavy carvings — and innumerable small hexagonal panes,—the mouldering carpet beneath his feet, —the brilliant colours of the altar-cloth, which this creature, more beautiful than a seraph, had been embroidering,—the ancient and dignified religious lady,—the

gray-haired, withered, lean, and melancholy priest, and, above all, the interesting countenance and most strange behaviour of the master of this castle, awakened everything that was imaginative in his character, and of imagination he had more than enough.

He felt as if he were suddenly transported three centuries back, and yet as if, for the first time in his life, he found himself in his proper element.

He kept up the conversation as well as he could with the lady and Mr. Sullivan, but he wanted to be silent, to be allowed to sit quiet, and observe and marvel—and lose himself in pleasant astonishment and admiration. Above all, he longed to watch the door at which Geraldine had disappeared, and by which he most impatiently expected her to return.

She was not very long away. She returned, followed, according to the fashion of the times, — when regular lunch was not—by two serving-men; for we must not call these somewhat shaggy, red-haired, wild-looking, Irish fellows footmen, though they were dressed in rich

liveries. The liveries and the men who wore them would have looked equally strange upon the other side of the channel, the one so uncouth, the other so obsolete. Each wild man, however, carried a massive and very splendid silver salver, upon which refreshments were displayed.

These refreshments consisted of chocolate, served up in cups of the finest Sevres china, dating from the time of Louis Treize; of plates of the same material, filled with different sorts of cakes of the most exquisite delicacy both as to texture and flavour, such as were at that time made in convents. There were also small sandwiches of ham and chicken, with glasses of wine of different sorts already poured out, each wine being of the very finest description.

The robust appetite of our present youth would ill accommodate itself to such dainty fare; but such was the fashion of the midday meal in those days.

The viands were handed round. Every one who chose partook where they sat. Edwin accepted sandwiches and wine, Mr. Sullivan and the ladies each a small cup

of chocolate for civility sake, but the master of the house waved the refreshments from him as the servants brought them near, with an air of intense disgust, as if the very idea of swallowing made him feel faint. Presently, it seemed as if he could stand it no longer—he rose, and, in a hurried, agitated manner, left the room.

His daughter's eyes followed him uneasily, and she looked with a good deal of anxiety to Mr. Sullivan, as if for an explanation.

Mr. Sullivan cast down his eyes. That was all the explanation he attempted to give.

She seemed to understand it so far, as that something extraordinary had happened to disturb her father, and which could not be then explained; and she evidently laboured hard to collect her spirits, and by conversation with the stranger, conceal as well as she could the awkwardness of his situation.

She found herself soon rewarded for her politeness. There was something irresistibly attractive about Edwin, and Geraldine felt its influence before she was

aware,—so did the canoness,—so did Mr. Sullivan,—so did all.

In about half an hour the door again opened, and Lord Fermanagh returned. Those who knew his face well, might have discerned the traces of a recent paroxysm of grief and passion, but to those less acquainted with it, as was Edwin, the calmness so resolutely assumed might have imposed itself for tranquillity. He now drew a chair, sat down in the little circle, and began very courteously to inquire concerning his guest.

“You are lodging at some distance from us, I conclude, Mr. Langford?” he said, articulating the words with considerable difficulty; “for, in fact, there are no houses, but mere Irish cabins, within six or seven miles of this.”

“I cannot calculate the distance. Irish miles puzzle Englishmen. They seem of no—or, rather, of any determinable length. All I know is, that I have been out since six o’clock this morning, and . . . I beg your pardon,” looking at his watch, “I really had not the slightest idea how

late it was—I must be thinking of finding my way home.”

“Have you far over the mountains to go?” asked Mr. Sullivan.

“I really do not know which will be my best way of returning. I came along the sea-shore, but it is so broken into inlets, that it strikes me my nearest way back must be by land. No doubt you know the house, sir, it is the only one of its sort in this neighbourhood, and belongs to a Mr. Grogan, agent, I understand, to——?”

“Oh, yes,—certainly,” interrupted Mr. Sullivan, somewhat abruptly, “we know that side of the country, but——”

“The nearest way, I presume, must be over the mountains?” pursued Edwin, desirous to continue the conversation, yet scarcely knowing what to say, he was so astonished. The mere allusion to the name of the proprietor to whom Mr. Grogan was agent, seemed to have produced so much again unpleasant feeling.

“Yes,” said Geraldine,—who seemed less moved than the rest,—“that *is*, I believe, your nearest way. But, do you

know the country well enough to venture upon it? It is a most dreary and desolate tract, and rendered, I believe, positively dangerous by the pathless bogs, which stretch to immense distances in some directions—Mr. Sullivan—Papa?—And a storm is blowing up.”

“Such hospitality as we can offer,” said Lord Fermanagh, now arousing himself, and again addressing Edwin with his usual air of courtly politeness, “Such hospitality as we can offer, is, I fear, scarcely worth any one’s acceptance—but if Mr. Langford will partake of the simple fare we have to offer, and a bed for the night, I can only say he will give us great pleasure.”

Mr. Sullivan fixed his eyes earnestly and searchingly upon Edwin during this speech. He seemed to find something wonderfully interesting in his appearance, whilst Lord Fermanagh smothered a sigh every time he addressed him.

“I am sure,” said Edwin, eagerly, “you are only too good. I shall be most happy to accept your invitation—if the ladies will excuse my dress—For, truth to

tell, I know not in the least my way home, and should be certain to lose myself—and then—and then—” hesitating a little, “it is so long since I have enjoyed society.”

“Mr. Grogan is not, then, to your taste?” said Mr. Sullivan. “I am not surprised at it.”

“Not exactly — though he seems an excellent man in his way.”

“An active and thriving agent,” said the priest.

“And a driving one, perhaps,” added Edwin; “A little too much of that I fear. But when one acts for another, there is little choice.”

“There is,” was the reply, “and therefore it is that I lament to see so much duty done by deputy in this country.”

CHAPTER XII.

Thy dress was like the lilies,
And thy heart as pure as they ;
One of God's holy messengers
Did walk with me that day.

LONGFELLOW.

THE dinner was much such as Lord Fermanagh's invitation seemed to imply. It was served in a sort of rude mixture of pomp, simplicity, and rude abundance.

There was a good deal of rich old family plate upon the table and sideboard ; but the earthenware, and all things of more modern character, were of the plainest, nay, coarsest description. The table was loaded with joints of meat, roasted or boiled, without the least pretension to more elaborate cookery ; except, as regarded the pastry, and sweet dishes (for

the whole dinner was set upon the table together), these were of extraordinary delicacy and even beauty—being, in fact prepared by the female attendant of Madame la Chanoinesse, who had received her instructions in a French convent.

One other person joined the party at dinner,—who was introduced to Edwin as Mr. O'Toole, but who received the honourable epithet of father, whenever he was addressed by the rest of the company. He was a little wiry, active, dark man; with a sallow cheek, and a restless eye. He sat between Geraldine and Madame, and devoted his whole attention to them, scarcely exchanging a sentence with Lord Fermanagh; behaving, indeed, to the master of the house so much as if he were a stranger, that one wondered to see him at his table.

The repast was not very lively. Lord Fermanagh seemed preoccupied, melancholy, and thoughtful. He said little, and it seemed to be at the expense of considerable effort that he was able to direct as much conversation to Edwin as common politeness required. To Mr.

O'Toole he spoke only twice. Once to ask him to take wine; once to inquire what he thought of the weather.

Which weather, indeed, seemed inclined to speak for itself. For loud blasts of wind rose at intervals roaring round the castle, and shaking the old casements with most portentous violence; whilst the waves were heard breaking in loud thunders upon the shores below, echoing among the rocks, and ominous of the approaching storm. At intervals, too, the heavy splashes rather than drops of rain beat against the windows.

“Put more turf upon the fire,” said the master of the house, turning to one of the attendants.

There were a crowd of them in waiting, the shaggiest and roughest-looking of beings that ever were seen—so far as rude tangled looks, wild glancing eyes, faces all rugged with exposure to the weather, and wiry limbs, which spoke of early starvation, went. And yet there was a something which the Celt has, and the Saxon has not. A something poetic,—

spiritualised—in the face which betrayed the imaginative, and the enthusiastic.

It was there, however, darkened by bad instruction, or degraded through want of development, from having had no instruction at all. There was not one of these wild serving-men who was not as an individual, a character marked and peculiar. There was nothing the least approaching to what Carlyle calls Flunkeyism, in these untutored servitors ; who flew about, tumbling against each other in their hurry to be first whenever Lord Fermanagh, or the Lady Geraldine, asked for anything.

Lord Fermanagh once or twice glanced at his guest, and turned his head, at all this noise and confusion, and rolling of plates, and blundering against each other which was going on, as if intending a reprimand ; but he seemed to recollect himself, smiled as it were internally, and, refraining from all interference, resumed his thoughtful expression and attitude.

And now the wind roared louder and, louder—and louder and louder thundered

the lashing waves upon the beach. At last the rain-storm burst forth with all its fury, and the floods, pouring down like a water-spout, dashed against, as if they would beat in, the casements.

Mr. O'Toole looked round.

"A fearful night enough," remarked he to Father Sullivan.

"You will not be able to go on to-night," answered the other. "It will be impossible."

"I must; I ought," said O'Toole.

"Oh, Mr. O'Toole! quite impossible! no boat would live five minutes in such a wind as this. You must be lost, if you attempt to cross the bay; and as for the way by land! Every mountain stream will be a torrent,—every bog a lake; and every crag—Oh, you would be blown to atoms!"

This was the elder lady's speech.

The younger one said,—

"Nothing but an affair of life or death ought to carry a person from under my father's roof, on such a wild night as this."

Father O'Toole lifted his face, which

was bent towards his plate, as she said this, and gave her a sudden, hasty glance ; but there was nothing to be seen in her face, but a look of the most unaffected kindness and hospitality ; and he resumed his dinner, with which, indeed, he seemed to be more engaged than any of the rest of the party.

For Edwin's heart was in too strange a condition for him to eat, and Geraldine seemed as little inclined as he. Mr. Sullivan's fare was always of the simplest and most abstemious kind ; and the lady canoness only tasted the little delicate *friandises*, to which she had been accustomed.

Edwin endeavoured to converse, and make himself agreeable at his entertainer's board ; but the undertaking seemed difficult, There seemed to be few subjects which did not seem to lie under a sort of obscure, ill-defined *taboo*.

If he spoke of the condition of Ireland, the priests exchanged furtive glances, and Lord Fermanagh looked uneasy. If he turned the conversation to England, not one of the party, except Lord Fermanagh

himself, had ever been there, or seemed to know anything about England. The master of the house, too, appeared to find the subject unpleasant, and Mr. Sullivan took such evident pains to divert the discourse whenever it tended that way, that it was impossible to pursue it. Of books, of amusements, of what was going on in London, in the world of fashion, every one seemed ignorant or to be indifferent. They appeared a little better acquainted with proceedings at Paris, or St. Omer; but were evidently very cautious of entering upon such topics.

So, had it not been for the influence of that lovely face and form, with which he had fallen at once and irretrievably in love, Edwin would have found the dinner heavy enough. But in love he had fallen, suddenly, and at first sight; and La Bruyère—no mean authority—assures us such impressions are the deepest, and the most ineffaceable. He affirms the fact, but troubles himself not to explain it.

Geraldine was like the Sophia in Rousseau's "Emilius." She had seen very little of mankind. In her solitude, she

had worshipped an ideal—a sort of imaginary idol of her own creating; and now she at once saw all her girlish dreams realised in the charming young man who was sitting beside her.

They were already advanced so far, that general conversation was becoming irksome. Their voices fell, they spoke to each other in low tones, and every whispered sentence seemed to confirm the strange sympathy which already existed between them.

Lord Fermanagh was too much abstracted to observe what was going on.

And now the storm became perfectly terrific. Such a tornado as this was not common even upon that tempest-beaten coast. But the tumult without only made the peace within the more pleasing by contrast. The company spent the evening over a glowing turf fire, in a lofty and very large saloon—or drawing-room; the company being sheltered and parted off from this utter wilderness of an apartment, by an ample, old-fashioned, and time-faded screen.

Geraldine had drawn her embroidery-

frame towards her, and sat in a small, low chair, by the side of the great *fauteuil*, in which her aunt was placed. Madame was pretending to be employed, in what the French of that day were so fond of, and what they called *parfiler*—literally, this being to pull gold embroidery to pieces, and separate it into threads, to be worked up again. The old lady, however, was comfortably dosing.

Father O'Toole had been absent great part of the evening. At one time he was joined by Mr. Sullivan; at another by Lord Fermanagh: but after tea, they all three joined the circle by the fire; and whilst Edwin, seated close to the embroidery-frame, watched the flowers growing under the fair fingers, and talked and sighed by turns, Father O'Toole, evidently now in excellent spirits, made all the *frais*, as the French say, of the conversation.

He could talk in the most lively and agreeable manner upon many topics, in which Edwin and Geraldine were both soon tempted to join: but Lord Fermanagh, though he spoke rather more than he had

done at dinner, was still thoughtful and preoccupied ! and Mr. Sullivan's countenance betrayed very visible signs of restlessness and dissatisfaction.

When the party separated for the night, the noise of the storm was so loud that it was with difficulty they could hear each other speak. And as they went along the narrow vaulted passages, down which the wind was rushing with such violence, it was difficult to keep home-made Irish candles alight. Edwin, however, made his way to the room assigned to him,—a large and dreary apartment. It was scantily furnished with a few worm-eaten chairs, covered with faded green velvet, and containing a bed, dark as a funereal canopy, with curtains, once of green velvet, but now black with age.

The bed stood in a gloomy recess ; but the turf fire burnt warm and cheerfully ; and though the noise and howling of the tempest without broke upon his ear, and the loud shrieking of the wind startled him at intervals, like some ominous voice of “supernatural wailing,” yet the fair image of Geraldine gave a charm to all.

Her look—her smile! that sweet voice! those twin stars, her eyes!

He sat by the fire till it was nearly extinguished, recalling every sweet look, every tone, every syllable that could excite imagination or minister to hope; whilst the voice of the tempest shrieked and roared in vain. At last he went to his gloomy bed, fell asleep, and dreamed of Elysium.

He slept peacefully. Whilst she, her innocent head laid like a sleeping baby's upon her pillow, slumbered too, dreaming of happiness such as her fondest fancy had never yet pictured.

For was he not walking upon the lonely sea-beach by her side, and telling her that he loved her?

But, whilst these two rested peacefully, what were the others about?

The three gentlemen were sitting in a small remote chamber, secured from the observation of any one of the household. The door was locked, and one single candle placed upon the table. And now Father

O'Toole, taking the roll from out of an inner breast-pocket, extended upon the table a paper covered over with names.

"The list is a good deal increased, you see, my lord," said he, with an air of satisfaction, "since I had last the pleasure of showing it to you. See here, and here,——" pointing to one or two among the many signatures; "Good men, and true."

"I am surprised," replied Lord Fermanagh, bending down to and examining the writing with a grave, almost sad, curiosity; "I own I am surprised.—Enterprises such as these belong to men harassed, disappointed, heartsick, like myself. These men—what have these men to complain of?"

"Much—Everything. Every Irishman, let alone every Irish Catholic, has, surely, enough to complain of. Believe me, my lord—to be excluded from every avenue to honour—shut out from every path of distinction, galls a noble spirit only the more—because, perhaps, as far as the bare conveniences of life are concerned, he may have nothing seriously to com-

plain of. The soul, my lord, cannot be fed with the bread which perisheth—and when deprived of its nourishment—the maddening sense of such hunger becomes only the more intense because that of the body is satisfied.”

“But are we to throw a whole country into confusion—a country, by your own admission, flourishing and improving—for the sake of gratifying the ambition of men—such as this one—and this one—and this one?” pointing to the names; “Such as—myself! I thought this enterprise was the revolt of men ruined, perishing under the effects of unjust and most tyrannical laws! To right *them*! Mr. O’Toole,—not to send this one, or that one, to lord it at the Castle, or flourish it in the Phoenix Park—was *my* object.”

“No doubt, my lord, no doubt! The names I allude to—what are *they* in this multitude? One, three, five at the utmost; amid thousands of real sufferers—daily sufferers, hourly sufferers, through the grinding oppression of ages!”

Mr. Sullivan sighed, took up the paper, glanced over it, laid it down, sighed again,

and then said, "But, the means—the means! Who can tolerate the means? It seems to me," he went on, with increasing warmth, "as if a second-sight was for the moment granted to me—And what do I behold? Blood, blood, blood! Nothing but blood!"

"And if it be so—and if you do?" cried Father O'Toole, impetuously, "was ever any great cause carried through without blood? Any great emancipation effected without blood? The altar of Liberty requires its victims—the goddess of Freedom exacts her sacrifices. My blood, for one, shall be shed willingly—willingly before the sacred shrine. Shall yours be withheld, my lord?"

"Mine—mine?" he repeated, somewhat mournfully. "Time was when it was generous and warm, and worthy to be offered in such a cause—Now, it is frosty and stagnant."

"We will arouse it—We will warm it!" cried the priest, with enthusiasm. "Oh, when the generous banner of freedom is waving over your head; when, sword in hand, you are cutting your way through

hosts of assembled miscreants,—paid defenders of an infamous tyranny!—Oh, when the exterminating brand of your God and your country is flashing before your eyes—will not your blood—the blood of your ancestors—bound in transport through your heart! Rekindling in your veins all the extinguished life of energy you deplore?”

The eye of Marcus Fitzroy—the old flashing eye of reckless enthusiasm, kindled at this wild rhapsody. Nature—his daring, vehement nature—returned for a moment in all her force. O’Toole eyed the ardent countenance with exultation, and glanced triumphantly at Mr. Sullivan—who looked down, and said,

“If it were our own blood only!”

“To sanctify the sacrifice? What! would you absorb the honour,—like a selfish, greedy caitiff—all yourself? Would you, when your country calls, endeavour to stifle the voice of multitudes starting from the crimson grave of victory to reply? Would you——?”

“I would rather listen to the still small voice within us—For God, we are taught,

was not in the mighty wind, nor the loud tempest."

"You speak rhapsody, O'Toole," said Lord Fermanagh.

"And who would not—who but would not fire at the thought? Who but Sullivan there?—frosted with age, chilled with disappointment, his brain paralysed by doubt. A secret renegade from his Church, a secret traitor to the generous cause of his country—who but he, would not kindle into glorious flame at the mere thought?"

"I love my country," said Mr. Sullivan, gently.

"And your church—and your church?"

"And my church," said he with a little hesitation, and the faint colour overspreading his pale cheek.

O'Toole eyed him, then turned away. He would not press him farther. It was no business of his, or those with whom he acted, to drive men into an open profession of apostacy from their creed, either in politics or religion. Their force lay in the *prestige* of numbers. One open defaulter from the fold was a scandal, and a grievous

loss. They were content with external adherence when they could not gain the heart. Anything but open defection.

He turned away, vexed and troubled for the moment. Soon, however, he addressed Mr. Sullivan again, and holding out his hand, said,

“Forgive me, brother; I am too hasty. I ought not to doubt your good Faith—but to honour your philanthropy—which I assure you I most truly and cordially do.”

Mr. Sullivan gave his hand coldly.

CHAPTER XIII.

Thus Hope, first pouring from her blessed horn
Her dawn far lovelier than the moon's own morn ;
Till higher mounted strives in vain to cheer
The weary hills, impervious black'ning near.

WORDSWORTH.

WHEN Edwin arose the next morning, the fury of the storm was far from having abated.

As he looked out from the narrow window, deeply buried in the immense thickness of the wall, he thought he never had beheld so wild a scene. Huge masses of heavy black clouds, driven by the violence of the western wind, were hurrying across the sky. The vast waters of the Atlantic, lashed to fury by the storm, came tumbling in huge masses upon the shore, making the very rocks shake and echo again with

their roar. The whole ocean scene was one field of white crested mountain waves, rising and falling, tossing and breaking, in the wildest confusion, whilst the wailing shrieks of the wind, and the wild cries of sea birds as they soared aloft into the rack, or skimmed above the angry waves, added to the confusion of the scene before him.

To stir from the castle upon such a day, it soon became evident, was impossible. The wind was so strong that neither man nor horse could stand it upon shore, far less boat live at sea. The party assembled, including Father O'Toole, were perforce kept together, though the priest was evidently under the greatest impatience to be gone. This upon the third day he effected, taking his departure in a driving rain which few men would have liked to have encountered; but Edwin was persuaded not only to wait for better weather, but to prolong his stay for a few days,—the first opportunity which a pause in this tempestuous weather allowed being made use of to send for his portmanteau from Mrs. Grogan's.

Once established with his portmanteau,

you will easily guess how it went with him.

He loved,—he soon found reason to believe that it would not be in vain. He was a sort of outcast from his own family; here he was received and welcomed into the bosom of another.

It was all in the natural course of a young man's life. The woman he loved was of an age, a rank, an education, a position, suited to his own. He was free to choose—the undoubted heir of a large fortune. Why should he not remain where he was? Pursue his good fortune and secure his happiness? There seemed not one, even, plausible reason against the measure.

He was so content with his new friends,—so absorbed with, and so happy in his passion,—that he began to look with that indifference—which a young man is apt, under such circumstances, to feel—upon all which was going on elsewhere. He seldom turned his thoughts towards Ravenscliffe, for the subject was painful and irritating—neither did he observe that Mrs. Langford's letters had become rarer

and briefer, so that many weeks had rolled away since he had heard from her at all.

He was thinking of other things. Life was opening to him with prospects of happiness such as surpassed his brightest imaginations. He had at last declared the passion in words—which had long been manifest in every other way; and Geraldine, with downcast eyes and faltering voice, had referred him to her father.

And now it is after dinner, and Mr. Sullivan has retired; and Edwin, colouring to the temples, has opened his heart to Lord Fermanagh, and asked permission to pay his addresses to his daughter.

“I know I am as much her inferior in every quality that gives value to a human being,” he said, “as I am in rank. But my family is proud of its antiquity, for our blood has been as yet untainted—Our house of unstained reputation through eight successive centuries, during which that estate which my father still holds, and which will descend to me as his eldest son and heir, has been held by Langfords. Ravenscliffe is a secluded place, I own; there is not much society, nor, what the world calls

gaiety, to be found there; but I am mistaken in the Lady Geraldine's disposition, if that be necessary to her happiness. The property," he went on, a little surprised at Lord Fermanagh's unbroken silence, "is of considerable extent, and has been so much improved by the good management through many generations, of a race not proverbial for extravagance—that it affords more than ample means to gratify the wishes even of a man fonder of expense than myself. Though, I believe, I must own to being of a somewhat less philosophical turn than my ancestors—perhaps, I fancy, the first prodigal in my family."

"*My* estate," Lord Fermanagh began, now breaking silence, "is unlike yours. It has *not* been improved. It has *not* increased in value under the good management of successive generations. It has crumbled to pieces under centuries of neglect, careless or oppressive misrule. It has been dismembered by treachery, and all the better part of it is gone to reward a traitor and a renegade. My father, through the advantage taken by a younger brother of penal laws enacted

in days of violence and barbarism, was an impoverished man. I am still poorer. —My daughter ought to have been the heiress of that fine property of which your friend Mr. Grogan is the agent. That, too, has been lost, through injustice and domestic villany. Edwin, the laws of this country are constructed to rear domestic traitors. The crop has not been large, in proportion to the culture employed; but this house has twice been shaken. This castle, this track of mountain and bog behind us, is all that remains to me of what was once a princely domain, and even that is deeply mortgaged. When I die, Geraldine will be a beggar. But our religion opens its arms to such—and there are convents where young women of ancient family”

“My lord, I have enough for both,—enough for all. My father is rich. He has but two children besides myself. I have reason to believe that a considerable portion of money, beside the family estate, will be mine; for in spite of this temporary alienation, he loves me,—I know he loves me.”

“And well he may,” said Lord Fermanagh, in a hollow tone.

“Then you will allow me,—then I may claim to myself the honour, the unspeakable happiness of calling Geraldine mine?”

“I cannot object. I, Edwin—I have observed, and I confess with anxiety, that you were becoming dear—too dear. I am upon one subject weak as a child. I never can and never will cross a genuine attachment. But will your father—Will Randal Langford consent?”

“Why should he not? Upon what earthly pretence could he refuse his consent to an alliance, which not only will constitute my more than earthly happiness, but do me the highest honour? Besides, these are things upon which I disclaim a father’s right to interfere. The happiness of a life should be at no disposal but a man’s own But I am confident that my father could not—would not.—It is impossible that he should He is neither weak, nor blind, nor capricious—He will be as proud of the honour done to his son, as he ought to be He must be. To suppose

otherwise would in me, who know him well, be as unjust as irrational."

"I knew him once," said Lord Fermanagh. "We met, and parted under painful circumstances—not as friends."

"You knew him!—You have met him, my lord! When and where? Impossible!"

"Not impossible. I was for a short period at one of your English Universities. He was there at the same time.—We were not good friends."

"I am sorry,—I can conceive"

"Your father was not an amiable man. I was a rash, and headstrong youth. We came into collision Perhaps he has not forgotten it."

"So long ago! Oh my lord! You do not suppose my father could bear resentment so long as that? He is stern; sometimes, perhaps, inclined to be unforgiving—but nothing like that,—nothing approaching to that."

"Perhaps I mistake him," said Lord Fermanagh, willing to be persuaded. His heart was already wrapped up in this child of Eleanor Wharncliffe's; and the idea of

a union with him through his daughter, and of that daughter's safe settlement in the world, was a sore temptation.

"I may do Randal Langford injustice," thought he. "Years have made a changed man of me; why should they not of him?"

"I probably do him injustice?" he repeated, aloud.

"That I am sure you do," cried Edwin, warmly; "Forgive me for saying so; but that I am sure you do!"

And in these fond persuasions, in this blind faith, these two talked themselves into security.

Geraldine Fitzroy was allowed to accept of Edwin Langford, and already look upon him in the tender light of a husband. How love grows and strengthens under such circumstances I need not tell those happy ones who have lived through that Paradise.

That bliss of Paradise before the fall, when a faithful passion arising between young hearts, united by close sympathy of character, is strengthened and endeared by the prospect of that tender union, that

sacred tie which Heaven has consecrated in marriage.

She was a lovely and loving creature, rich and rare in gifts of the intellect and heart. Reared under the eye of her melancholy but most accomplished father, carefully taught by Mr. Sullivan, and instructed in all matters that more immediately concern female education by her aunt, who was quite equal to this part of the task.

Geraldine was, indeed, a flower blooming in the wilderness, — the dearer to Edwin upon that account. Whilst her father and her aunt had watched her growth into womanhood with that mixture of admiration and sadness, with which we mark the growing perfections of some being, to all appearance doomed to be the victim of adverse circumstances, and denied the ordinary advantages common to her years and position.

The extreme poverty into which the family had sunk; her religion; the remote corner of Ireland where what remained of

her father's property was situated, all conspired to forbid any reasonable hope of her establishment in the world. A convent, the cold melancholy cloister, was the only shelter the father could look forward to for his lovely, blooming, girl; evidently ill-suited, by temper or disposition, to find happiness in that routine of forms, to which the inhabitants of such seclusions are condemned.

To Lord Fermanagh himself, — no longer a believer in the efficacy of such sacrifices, — a sceptic not only as regarded the Roman religion, but his faith in every mode of religion shaken, such a fate appeared one of unmitigated wretchedness, compensated by no consideration, save that of mere personal security and daily bread.

Every day, as the charms of this lovely creature,—the tenderness of her disposition, her cheerful temper, and innocent enjoyment of any little variety or recreation which the retired situation of her father's castle allowed, displayed themselves; did his heart in secret the more bitterly revolt against the sacrifice. And,

it was this feeling, perhaps, even more than the long list of wrongs, — treasured up, and handed down from generation to generation, — which exasperated him against the present order of things; and prepared him to become the victim of those crafty conspirators who were, by degrees, enclosing the kingdom in an invisible but most firmly constructed net of secret rebellion. A net firmly compacted, woven together, — and widely extended, — that it seems almost a miracle that the plan, audacious as it was, should have been so effectually defeated.

Father O'Toole was one of the most active emissaries of the higher governing Committee of the United Irishmen, or Defenders, as they were at that time called. He was in direct communication with the powerful heads of that conspiracy, which was so artfully constructed, that to betray beyond a certain extent was impossible for any one who might turn Approver. Each individual being acquainted only with the man by whom he was sworn, the ten men to whom as member of a body he belonged, and acting

under the directions of a nameless sub-committee of which the individual to whom he had given his oath and his shilling was a member. Beyond that, all was darkness. The very sub-committee-man himself was acquainted with one member of the superior committee only, through whom he received his directions; and thus the conspiracy was constructed in so artful a manner, that no traitor to the cause could carry his information beyond a given point,—at which point all communication upon alarm being given, was immediately broken off. The Government thus finding themselves suddenly at fault, and a few insignificant individuals alone captives in their hands.

Father O'Toole, however, was one who communicated with the highest powers; the secret heads and movers of the conspiracy—and, it had long been his object to add the name of Lord Fermanagh to that of those few really influential personages, who formed the nucleus of the rebellion.

O'Toole was a busy, crafty, ambitious, unprincipled man; a true Roman priest, in the worst acceptation of the word.

One who, absolved from all domestic ties, found aliment for a craving appetite for excitement, and most hungry ambition, in the religious and political convulsion of all Europe in general, and more especially in those of his own country at the time.

Of a family too obscure to hope to raise himself to influence and eminence in any other way, the prospect opened by the recent events in France, afforded scope for his boundless desire of personal aggrandisement and notoriety. To throw his country into confusion, — to ruin and destroy by his rash impatience, all that harvest of progressive good which it is agreed, by the best authorities, was at that time taking place in Ireland,—cost this bad man nothing. To stir up all the evil passions of man,—to bathe the green peaceful fields of his country in blood,—to sever all ties,—abrogate every law, — make a general devastation and clearance of all which the successive efforts of generations had erected, was to his unprincipled selfishness, not worth a thought.

He clothed his designs in fine phrases. His mouth was filled with the animating

words of liberty, justice, and universal philanthropy. They had been used or misused upon the other side of the water, and he had learned their power.

No demagogue but well understands it. Satan is never so dangerous as when disguised as an angel of light. Such words rouse all that is warm, loving, generous, enthusiastic, in the human heart; and to the praise of our race it must be granted that such noble influences, far exceed in power those of mere selfish personal considerations.

Father O'Toole knew this well; and used the magic words accordingly,—and also, like many other pseudo-patriots, he, in part, perhaps, deceived himself,—half believed in his own enthusiastic feelings,—and was able to ignore the self-seeking, the miserable vanity and ambition, which lay at the root of all. He might, and perhaps did, impose upon himself. But he succeeded in imposing neither upon Lord Fermanagh, nor upon Mr. Sullivan. Both had received their lesson, and were no longer to be deceived.

Mr. Sullivan, was the wretched servant

of a church whose hollowness and falsehood he had detected, and he was little inclined to enter with ardour into schemes to establish the ascendancy of a system which he believed to be valueless. Besides he was a man, too, of extreme gentleness and humanity. Blood and violence he abhorred. His aspirations were for order and peace. He would willingly have waited with patience for the gradual development of a brighter day. He had not courage, or rather he was not rash enough, to do evil that good might come. He had no faith in the power to advance happiness through wrong and violence.

It was with extreme solicitude and much pain that with these sentiments he watched the effect produced by O'Toole upon Lord Fermanagh. Never, never under all the bitter regrets he had endured for influence misused and forfeited, had he reproached himself so severely as he did now. Lord Fermanagh, mistaken as his conduct had been, still loved him. But Lord Fermanagh consulted with him no more.

Upon the great question now in agitation, whilst hesitating whether to join

heart and hand in the great effort about to be made to change the system of society in his country—or whether to stand aside—Lord Fermanagh held counsel with no one but himself.

Once or twice poor Sullivan had gently attempted to remonstrate, but he perceived that his words were scarcely attended to. If Lord Fermanagh listened, it was as a man listens to the dotage-talk of one he has long loved, and whom from domestic piety he will not wound by interrupting—nothing more. There was not the slightest remnant remaining of the deferential attention with which what he urged had once been attended to.

The good old man sighed, and desisted.

O'Toole urged his point pertinaciously, and harangued with the warm eloquence which seems the attribute of his countrymen.

Lord Fermanagh was an unhappy and dissatisfied man, and he had been a sufferer every way from the institutions by which he found himself surrounded. His personal happiness had long been destroyed, and society held out no public

career to stimulate his ambition or reward his exertion. Life stagnated ; and stagnation is, of all the inflictions to which this weary being of ours is subject, the most hateful and irritating to a mind and temper such as his. The only thing left upon earth which Marcus loved or cared for was his daughter, and what a prospect did the present arrangements of society hold out for her.

Wretched himself, Lord Fermanagh was the more ready to sympathise with wretchedness wheresoever he found it; and though the evidence given upon the State trials of this period—and even the admissions of the criminals themselves, would lead us to believe that Ireland was never at any time making so rapid a progress as just before the rebellion broke out—the philanthropical declamations of O'Toole—his over-charged pictures of present misery, and future ruin worked a too certain effect.

Lord Fermanagh disliked, it might not be too much to say despised, the priest. He easily detected the selfish ambition which lay shrouded under these patriotic declamations—and yet, strange contradic-

tion ! They seemed not the less to work their effect. He held light by the man, and yet gave almost implicit faith to his representations—and, blinded by this sophistry, cared not to examine what those things really were which he suffered to be imposed upon him under such fine names. Thousands and thousands of honest hearts were at that time thus abused and misled : thousands and thousands of honest hearts are thus deluded to this very day.

But whilst Father O'Toole declaimed, and Lord Fermanagh listened, and Mr. Sullivan alone in his little chamber shed tears of grief and regret, the two young people, in the love-dream of present happiness, and tasting all the joys which attend upon a well-placed and fervent attachment, were becoming more and more attached to each other every day. Every day adding strength to those pledges which they had given to fortune—till all that could make life valuable, —ay, life and reason itself, were become dependent upon the will of others.

Ah those others ! what will they do, and what have they been doing ?

CHAPTER XIV.

A phantasm, in which roof and wall
Shook—totter'd—swam before his sight.

White Doe of Rylstone.

THERE he, the tall spare man. His raven locks are now slightly silvering with gray — The furrows of his sallow cheek engraved by passion and care still deeper; his stern brow, long darkened with the exercise of severe and undisputed authority, is more lowering than ever, and so is the gloomy fire of his deep sunken eyes.

He is hurrying with hasty strides and with impassioned gestures, through that path which leads to the blackest and obscurest depths of the woods of Ravenscliffe. His face, always strongly marked by the lines ineffaceable of the passions

which have once swept over it, though usually so sternly composed and calm, is now working and convulsed almost to agony. His fists are clenched, and his hands swing with a sort of violence at his side as vehemently he hastens on—flying—from what ?

From the agonies of his own heart. For he *has* a heart—oh yes ! he has a heart—A cruel—cruel heart it may be ; but if implacable and barbarous to others, it is the devouring vulture of Prometheus to himself. That vulture, his own fierce nature, is now rending and tearing as it were every fibre of that wretched heart, wrenching the whole fabric in pieces.

He had loved in his youth, passionately and vehemently loved, and his passion had met with the most cruel reverse ; yet there was something in his love for Eleanor Wharncliffe, something in genial youth perhaps, that had softened in some degree his misery. But now he had loved again, and with a love passing the love of women ; with an intense though hidden affection—the calm unchanging attachment of later years. Years most ungenial

to the affections as his had been,—yet he had loved intensely, loved secretly, loved jealously, loved with that love which ever fearfully borders upon hate.

He had been cruelly wounded by the child he so loved ; but what had tormented him beyond endurance, was the perpetual droppings of that woman's tongue at his ear ; who, despised and mistrusted as she might be, yet worked her way. He had, moreover, been rendered additionally wretched by the dislike which he allowed himself to cherish towards the son whom he saw obtruded upon him in exchange for the idol of his affections ; yet he could not altogether help feeling some respect for the qualities of his second son ; and, under the sense of his unwilling justice and involuntary injustice, he smarted perhaps more than from all the rest.

In this manner Randal Langford had been suffering something very like actual torture for months, and all this had brought him into a state of mind than which nothing it seemed worse could be endured ; but below the lowest depths there is a lower

depth, and this the unhappy man was doomed to find.

He had been ill, indeed, prepared to receive the letter which he had just opened, and of which, having violently torn in two as soon as read, he still held the fragments in his clenched hand.

EDWIN TO RANDAL LANGFORD.

“MY DEAR FATHER,—The time has come when I can no longer maintain the silence which seems, I scarcely know how, to have grown up between us. I can hold it no longer.—If I was hasty, rash, disobedient, forgive me, sir.—If I saw things in a mistaken light, forgive me also.—I desired to do right. I am young. It is difficult for one so inexperienced to know what *is* right. But a change has taken place in my views of things, and now, at last, I begin to understand how hard it must go with a father who finds a son apparently in revolt against his views and opinions.

“If I had understood this earlier, though in some things I might not have found

it possible to *think* differently, I trust I should have expressed my dissent *very* differently. I, therefore, late as it is, come now to ask your pardon for whatever was amiss in what I did.

“Forgive me, Father !

“Long before this I would have written, only that partly, I feared to intrude into your presence even by letter, when I thought you so deeply offended,—partly, I was not till lately prepared to make those submissions which I believed were necessary to restore me to your affection.

“I am ready to make them now, for my heart is altogether softened and changed.

“These are the first fruits of influences most sweet and blessed, to which I look for the guidance of my future life. In short—for I am allowing the subject to run away with me,—I think you will not be surprised to hear that the common fate of men of my age has been mine, and that the heart has spoken and made its selection. I have fallen deeply and irrecoverably in love, and I now lay the state of my heart before you, entreating you to add your blessing to that which I feel

must prove mine,—in time and through eternity !

“The young lady who has honoured me by bestowing upon me—unworthy—her heart, is, in every respect, worthy to call you father. She is beautiful; but what is that? She is good, accomplished, talented, and possessed of a sweetness of temper, a natural gaiety of disposition—looks, tones, and words, that will indeed illuminate the walls of dear Ravenscliffe.

“Her position in life is superior to our own,—her family being noble, and of at least equal antiquity. In worldly wealth alone she is wanting. She is, to be brief, the daughter of an Irish nobleman, whose ancestral fortunes have been ruined under the execrable provisions of the now repealed penal laws.

Geraldine, in short, is a Fitzroy. The only child of Marcus Lord Fermanagh, of Castle ———, in the county of Kerry . . .”

He went no further. The paper was torn in pieces,—and Randal Langford,

rushing from the house like one seized with a sudden paroxysm of madness, plunged into the thickest portion of the woods.

He was, indeed, in a state of feeling which defies description.

With what intense, what exquisite pleasure had his heart leapt up when first his eye caught the superscription of the letter—his son's well-known hand! With what feelings had he snatched it up,—torn it open,—read the few first lines!—His heart absolutely overflowing with the tide of affections, unhappily too seldom indulged. Nay, a tear, a warm, honest tear of joy and joyfulness had moistened his eye. All the father was yearning within him to the returning prodigal!

He had read on—still kindly, sympathisingly, rejoicing, in spite of all that had passed, in the little history of a young man's heart,—as a father rejoices with the old natural, patriarchal joy over the prospect of a fresh generation springing up to continue his race.

Yes, he had read on.

But had the withering curse of Heaven fallen upon his heart and blasted him at once, he could not have appeared more utterly turned to stone than when he came to the fatal conclusion. One appeal was cast by his dark eye to Heaven. It was the sentiment of Orestes,—

“Graces aux dieux ! mon malheur passe mon espérance.”

But that first, momentary feeling of self-pity, yielded to a paroxysm of fury. Again !—and again !—and again ! Ever crossing his path of life. The destroyer of every blessing he possessed !

First wounding him in his youthful honour,—then in his first, fond, youthful love,—and now in his son—his only—his darling—his worshipped child !—The son of his love—the son of Eleanor Wharncliffe, robbing him of that ! Should he have that ?—Should he rob him of that, too ? Oh, misery ! misery ! misery ! Oh, rage ! rage ! rage ! and despair !

So he rushed into the depths of that dark, lonely wood, and there he kept striding up and down almost frantic with the agonies of his fury and despair.

And thus he passed, I know not how many hours, hating himself, his son, Marcus, every one — detesting the very light of day.

The sun had long set, and a cloudy twilight had settled over the scene before he returned and re-entered the house, and hurrying to his study, locked himself in, and wrote thus :

RANDAL LANGFORD TO EDWIN.

“Your letter I have received. Your submission would have given me unfeigned pleasure,—would have been gladly hailed by me, and our mutual good understanding restored . . . but wretched, miserable boy ! What have you done ?

“Do you know that the man whose daughter you ask me to accept, as mine —is my most hated, my most detested —enemy. Justly detested, and with reason hated more than death ?

“Do you know, that this was the man who, just as I was crossing the threshold of life, struck me down with a blow, and ruined my prospects for ever ?—That this was the man who broke into the sanctuary of

my dearest affections, and rifled me of my only—only treasure? Ask him, if you will, about Eleanor Wharncliffe,—Halloo the name,—the ever-blessed name, in his ear—and see! Judge for yourself!”

And here he threw away his pen, and started up, and the long-repressed tears burst forth in torrents, and he covered his face with both hands, and groaned.—It would have melted a heart of stone to hear. Then he sat down and wrote again.

“Yes, she died—I tell you he killed her!—We were happier than heaven itself, and he broke in—and came and killed her,—and I cursed him on that day,—and I took a fearful oath, and may God so deal with me as I keep it—that never, never, never, would I forgive—and that sooner or later I would have my revenge!

“Sooner or later in life I knew we must meet, for our lives were fated to each other—and I should have my revenge. The time is come—met again we *have*. And how!

“Is he to rob me of my son?—Eleanor Wharncliffe’s child! Judge for yourself. Shall his pennyless child come between

me and my child, and rob me of my son, —my name,—my estate? May the great God of heaven forbid! Never!—never! She! at my hearth,—the child of Marcus Fitzroy sitting at Randal Langford's hearth?—The earth would open and swallow up the monstrous pollution!

“I rave!—I feel that I rave!—I will write no more—I write nonsense,—I cannot even read what I have written. I will add only this,—come home, Edwin, instantly,—come home!

“Come without one moment's delay. As you love your father's blessing, as you dread his curse! Break off, without the hesitation of a second, this monstrous, this unnatural engagement. Engagement!—My head turns round. You *can* have formed no such engagement without consulting me. Even *your* new world principles, could not lead to such defiance of a parent as this!

“Return!—return without a moment's hesitation or delay. Your father's heart is open to you,—still warms to you,—still yearns to you, and his home, and his

everything are yours more than his own, Edwin."

The letter was written, or rather scrawled impetuously; the post was just going out, it was sealed and sent, and then, and not till then Randal Langford felt better.

He had unloaded his heart. Once more in his life he had yielded to spontaneous feeling. He felt relieved and better.

That this monstrous marriage should ever take place, was not within the range of possibilities. He had not the slightest fear upon that head. That anything so unexampled, so monstrous, as that his blood, and that of Marcus Fitzroy should mingle was not within credibility. He had written with all the passion which he felt, and it seemed to him that the sense of wrongs—so intensely resented—would be communicated to his son; that Edwin would sympathise in his father's injuries; and that the idea of an alliance by marriage with Marcus Fitzroy would become as hateful and abominable

to the young man—as it was to his father.

Convinced of this, he began, so soon as the letter had been dispatched, to breathe and gradually to recover his tranquillity. Not one word of the subject did he breathe to any one, though each of the family perceived that some terrible agitation had been gone through. The traces of its violence were still visible upon his pale and exhausted countenance.

Mrs. Langford eyed him with curiosity, Priest with suspicion, Emma, with interest and anxiety. Not one of them however dared to hazard a question, or even make the slightest allusion to the subject of their thoughts, and in a few days the matter died away, and things apparently resumed their usual course. But it was only apparently, for Randal Langford having entered into this explanation with his son, and the wall of separation which had kept them asunder so long, being broken down, passed the time in secret but almost pleasurable impatience, anxiously watching for his re-appearance ; or at least for the letter which would

announce his speedy return. This he expected, indeed, for many long days before the state of public communication, either by post or by public conveyances, would have admitted of it.

Happily unconscious of the storm which was brewing over his head, Edwin pursued his happy courtship. In the meanwhile a mysterious sort of discomfort and uneasiness seemed to pervade the household, and more especially the master of the family. The very air itself seemed pregnant with some of those portentous but obscure rumours which usually precede any great event. Lord Fermanagh and Mr. Sullivan were now often absent, and no one knew whither they went or for what purpose. But whatever their errand, they were sure both to return with troubled countenances, and brows charged with additional gloom and anxiety. Poor Mr. Sullivan in particular seemed quite breaking down under the pressure of mental suffering. This went on for a week or two. At last, one day

after dinner, sitting *tête-à-tête*, Lord Fermanagh began,—

“ Edwin — I have something to talk over with you.—Have you heard from your father ? ”

“ No, my Lord. It was impossible. The delays of the post are so great.—I could not receive an answer to my letter before a week, at least.”

“ And that answer—— ? ”

“ Will be all I can wish. I have not the slightest doubt of it.”

“ You think so?—Be it so,” was the reply, and in an absent manner, as if the thoughts of the speaker were travelling elsewhere.

By-and-by, he resumed the conversation thus—

“ It is particularly unfortunate—unfortunate in the highest degree that at this precise juncture, affairs of supreme importance should call me away from home. And—and—the state of the country—what we may expect — what we must expect—render it most particularly improper —unadvisable—that two helpless women, and one so young and so beau-

tiful; should be left unprotected during my absence."

"Not altogether unprotected, I trust, sir; for you will not banish me, I hope. It was a sort of understood engagement between us—was it not? That I should never leave this castle till I left it accompanied."

"Yes, Edwin, and so long as I was able to stay here, there was not the least objection upon my part to the fulfilling of this condition. But, there would be in the eye of the world, I believe, a sort of conventional impropriety in your remaining here, when I was absent,—and yet it is precisely upon that account—It is vexatious" he added with a look of perplexity.

"The eye of the world," said Edwin, "penetrating as it is, can hardly I think reach here.—But let it, and so be the means of obtaining for me a favour which will solve all difficulties. Give me your daughter before you leave us, Lord Fermanagh. I wish to pry into no secrets, but it is impossible for the most cursory observer not to perceive the tokens of

a coming storm. Whence it is to arise, whether from north, south, east, or west—whether there is to be an internal convulsion, or a foreign invasion—or perhaps both—of course, I have no means of knowing—but, that troubled times for Ireland are at hand, I feel certain. You, my Lord, are about to leave us—when and how to return? Events may occur. We know not what. Perhaps my evil forebodings are only the result of a lover's impatience to secure his happiness. But I don't know,—I have strong forebodings—irresistible forebodings. And therefore I beseech you, my lord, by all that is most dear to you, for this once to waive ceremony and break through etiquette.—Give me the hand of your daughter before you leave us? Give me a legitimate right to protect Geraldine, and accompany her wherever it may be necessary for her to go—should what I anticipate prove true? Exceptional times demand exceptional proceedings—make an exception in my favour, Lord Fermanagh?"

Thus he went on pleading, as people very much in earnest are apt to do, heaping sentence upon sentence, and argument upon argument, neither acquiesced in nor disputed, to the silent listener. He stopped, but Lord Fermanagh still did not speak, and it was some time before he broke silence by saying,

“I wish you had heard from your father.”

“I wish I had; but it is impossible. I have calculated the time. It is impossible that a letter should reach me before Friday week—and you say, my lord, that you must leave us on Monday next?”

“At latest.”

“Will not what I have urged have weight? In the most quiet times, how do events rush in between men and happiness delayed.—It is a fearful risk in the best of days,—but in these!—Let me beseech you to give me my Geraldine?”

He looked so earnest, so like his mother, as he pleaded!

Lord Fermanagh was, indeed, upon a little reflection, very much inclined to

yield. He knew, far better than Edwin, the fearful convulsion that was impending, and the violence of the contention, which must rend the island in pieces, and render for some time a scene of disorder and confusion. And, alas! he was well aware that those days of chivalry and honour were gone by, when the fairest of Ireland's maidens, bearing gems rich and rare, and a purse of gold in her hand, could walk uninjured from one end of her country to the other.

It was impossible to know to what extent evil might be carried; but that the most violent excesses would be committed by a barbarous peasantry, lashed into fury, upon the one side, and a brutal soldiery upon the other, could not be doubted. For they were rude and rough times in which he lived. He was aware, also, that his place as one of the leaders in the conspiracy, must take him frequently from home, and that his liberty and life would be continually in jeopardy.

These were, indeed, times of exception, as Edwin had argued; times when reality must take place of the conventional, and

delicacy be sacrificed to security. The only thing which still made Lord Fermanagh hesitate was the secret relation in which he stood to Randal Langford. He could not but feel many doubts as to the manner in which his old adversary would receive his overtures for a reconciliation, or be inclined to accept his alliance. Pride, delicacy—old feelings still not utterly obliterated—all seemed to conspire to render it necessary that no further step should be taken until the expected letter arrived. Yet, depart he must. And when?—if ever, to return? And his daughter—How could thus he leave her under the almost sole guardianship of a young man of Edwin's age, without the sanction of that tie which would afford her security and protection in the worst event?

Edwin saw his hesitation and urged his suit with fresh vigour. It was natural that he should earnestly desire to secure his own happiness and the power of protecting her he loved, and he was entirely ignorant of the state of the case as regarded his father and Lord Fermanagh.

And for himself he feared nothing. He felt certain that his father's sense of justice would sooner or later effect all he wished; and he trusted not a little to the influences his sweet Geraldine would exercise when once presented at Ravenscliffe, in softening his father's heart and obtaining pardon for both.

So he did not scruple to make the most positive assurances to Lord Fermanagh upon the subject, and after an hour's discussion his point was carried.

Lord Fermanagh resolved to wait as long as possible for the chance of a letter from England, but in case none arrived he was prevailed upon to fix an early hour upon Monday morning,—the very day he was to leave home—for the celebration of the marriage.

The ceremony was to be performed in the chapel of the castle, in the most private manner possible, and according to the forms of the two religions. Mr. Sullivan was to officiate in the Roman Catholic ceremony; and, it was agreed that a Mr. Johnson, who held a living upon the old Vernor estate, and with whom, on that account,

all parties were well acquainted, should be requested to ride over to the castle upon Sunday evening, and be ready to perform his part early upon the following day.

“ There will not be much time for preparation, dear child,” said Madame, “ but never mind that. I, for one—am quite of dear Edwin’s opinion. He must stay with us,—for what are two forlorn women to do by themselves in such a place as this,—and rumours of the French being expected to land every day. There is no knowing what may happen—but, with dear Edwin, we shall be quite safe,—He can carry us both off, you know, in case of danger—and take the whole authority upon himself.... and, in short, dear child—don’t now look so down-hearted—Monday will be a white day in your life, depend upon it.”

“ Don’t, my darling love,” said Edwin, who entered at the conclusion of this speech and sat down by her. “ Don’t look so scared and down-hearted, as your good aunt says. Is there anything so *very* awful in belonging to me?—Anything so

very terrible, Geraldine, in having me for your protector? . . . ”

“ Oh, don’t talk so, Edwin,” she said, looking at him with that smile of hers, so full of truth and affection that he was ready to worship her for it. “ You know—you know, too well, perhaps—it is not that. But my heart is heavy, I don’t know why. It will be heavy. I cannot look forwards with comfort. There seems a black, black veil—falling. I don’t know. Perhaps it is that I cannot believe in this sorrowful world, that there *can* be such happiness in store for me.”

“ Why not, my angel creature? When there is no such other as yourself upon earth?—Why should not our happiness be unparalleled because you are without parallel? ”

She smiled again, and looked up full in his eyes. She had a way of suddenly lifting her eyes, and there came what was like a flash of light from soul to soul; and then she would drop them again, and so she did now, and said,—

“ When I see so many, many poor creatures upon this earth miserable—when

I see so few that taste what I should call real happiness — what have I done, or what am I, that my portion should be so great? I cannot help asking myself this, Edwin.”

“Alas! my love — I wish that the only peril to your full content lay in its being a rare occurrence in this world. I fear, my darling, there may be many and many bitter drops mingled in your cup before long, my sweet Geraldine; but do not let us anticipate. Three more days and no power on earth can separate us. The angel of death alone can part us then, and I do not think even he will part us. Something tells me we shall go together, my love, when go we must—but that,” said he, rallying his spirits, affected by her sadness, “is, I trust, pretty nearly three-score years from us both yet.”

“Must my father positively go on Monday? And what is he going for? He never used to take a journey without letting us know where and why. — Is he going to be away a long time? And what is he going for?”

“Do not repeat the question, my pretty

one, or you will get answered as the Kate of Kates once was."

"How was that? Ah! I remember. It is in 'Henry the Fourth.' Oh, Edwin! what do you mean by that allusion?"

"I ought not to have made it; forget that I did. Only, dearest Geraldine, at least recollect it so far, as not to question one who can hide nothing from you, and yet has no right to speak. Your father will tell you all you ought to know."

"I will not ask you, Edwin. I would not do the slightest thing in the world to vex or displease you. Oh, Edwin! do not love me the less because I have 'no cunning to be strange,' as poor Juliet says,—I really have not."

And true it was, for she was truth and artlessness itself. She loved him with her whole girl's heart, most tenderly, most extremely, and she had not the gift to hide it. He well deserved this sincerity—So far at least; but the trial had yet to come. In the meantime he had the sweet assurance, that if she was necessary to his happiness, he, at least, was as essential to hers.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ever drifting, drifting, drifting,
On the shifting
Currents of the restless heart.

LONGFELLOW.

THE three days passed away; no letter from England arrived, to mar the fond hope with which Edwin looked forward to the succeeding morning, — for it was now Sunday night, and, about six o'clock. The preparations for the wedding had been few. A little brushing out of the chapel. A white dress prepared, and a long white veil sought out from the stores of the Chanoinesse, was nearly all.

The lovers spent their time as happy, confiding lovers do, in unmixed felicity. Lord Fermanagh, much as his mind was troubled by the aspect of the events in

agitation, found comfort upon the idea, that come what would, happen what might to him, his daughter's fate was secured.

He had arranged with Edwin that, under present circumstances, the best way would be, as soon after his own departure as affairs could be put in order, for himself and the two ladies to cross over to England, and there remain till the storm should have blown over. Edwin had resolved, immediately upon receiving his father's letter, to write and ask leave to bring his young wife to Ravenscliffe. A request which, in the present sanguine state of his mind, he had not the slightest doubt would be acceded to. He felt sure that his father would rejoice, as all fathers naturally do, in his eldest son and heir having made a suitable marriage; and Geraldine once seen was certain to approve herself to his affections.

So, in a very happy frame of mind, after dinner on Sunday—it might be about six o'clock in the evening,—Geraldine having gone up-stairs with her aunt to complete some little arrangements, Lord Fermanagh being closeted with Mr. O'Toole,

Mr. Sullivan sitting in the dining-room conversing with Mr. Johnson, who had just arrived, and he himself having nothing particular to do, Edwin sallied forth to take a stroll among the mountains. Without any particular reason for doing so, he chose the road by which the post-boy, when there were any letters to bring, usually arrived.

The post-boy was an itinerant and somewhat irregular conveyer of the letters, he usually not setting forth from his station at the nearest town where the mail passed—the said town being about fourteen miles distant—until a sufficient number of letters had accumulated to make it worth his while to commence his journey. This method of proceeding accounts for the great irregularity in the delivery of letters at Lord Fermanagh's castle.

The happy lover went slowly along, musing upon those pleasant prospects which fill a young man's brain upon such occasions, but, most of all, thinking of dear Ravenscliffe and his father. That father so truly loved, that home round which such strong affections clung, and

where—for imagination travels fast at such times—he saw himself living with his Geraldine, busied in diffusing good among those around him, aided in every effort by her activity and kindness, and more than rewarded by her sweet companionship. He even began to hear the voices of little children round his hearth.

It was a sweet dream, and he indulged it, and went wandering on further than he was aware through a solitary glen between the high barren mountains among which the road from Cahir ran; and down which a little mountain stream coursed away, sporting and gurgling. The evening was soft and still, everything profoundly quiet, except now and then the cry of a lamb upon some distant pasture; or the scream of the sea-eagle as he soared in the air.

Suddenly he heard the sound of a horse trotting along the distant road, and looking up, saw it was the post-boy. A slight terror, a very slight one, ran through his frame. He was so secure. Yet he could not help wishing there might be no letter, —wishing to-morrow were over, and the deed irrevocably done, before he should

hear from his father—He could not help wishing that.

“Any letters for the Castle?”

“Yes, sir, two.”

“Either of them for me?”

“Yes, sir, one.”

“Give it me, and say nothing about it. Take the other on.”

It was the inspiration of the moment, for he never intended concealment, or, indeed, imagined it could be necessary; so entirely did he confide in his father's affection and equity. And yet, naturally enough, his hand shook as he received the letter, and saw it directed in the large bold characters of his father's handwriting, though, as he fancied, something bolder and more scrawling, than was usual. He turned it two or three times round before he ventured to open it, and every time he looked at it his courage seemed to fail. His heart began to tremble and flutter. He sat down upon a stone, still holding the letter in his hand, scanning the direction—endeavouring to catch a word here and there through the somewhat transparent paper.

At last he broke the seal. He read it through at once, trembling in every limb as he proceeded; now burning with fever, now pale as death. Then he rose up, cast a look of despairing anguish round, and hurried along the road which led away from Castle ——, far, far away.

Would that he could hide himself for ever! What should he do?—What should he do?

Second thoughts are best, say some; second thoughts are worst, say others. First thoughts are impulses; second thoughts consideration: which will prove the best depends upon the character of the man.

In some cases, it is hard for the most well-intentioned to say what is really best. Cruel uncertainty! Edwin's first impulse was to hurry away, to forsake her he loved; to obey at once the fiery injunctions of his father; to yield without resistance to a hatred so unmeasured. It seemed as if no good, no happiness, nothing but never-ending alienation and strife could arise from a union so incongruous. It could not, it must not be.

But, as he hurried on, the first violence of passion and despair began to abate, and the restless impulse to break every bond, and cast away all that was dear on earth as a sacrifice to his father's resentment, to give way. He was forced to pause for breath. He sat down, had time to think, and then the reverse of the picture presented itself.

He saw her so loving, so devoted; whose heart he had won by his tenderness and his attentions, deserted. He thought of her forlorn and desolate situation; of her trusting father, her confiding self; of the morrow, upon which he was to complete that union which promised so much happiness for them all. And then he felt that it was impossible to go back—impossible! Honour, tenderness, generosity, alike forbade. For he did not forget in that supreme moment that he was rich and she was poor, he powerful and she helpless—that all he had to dare was a father's unjust displeasure, but that she lost everything at once in him.

The comfort he received from this view of things, as his blood began to cool, and

the impression received from his father's letter to weaken, was great, as was the happiness with which he persuaded himself that he had gone too far to retreat honourably, and that there was no course left for him but to proceed. But then another, and a more difficult question arose. Ought he not, at all events, to show this letter to Lord Fermanagh, and allow him, at least, the opportunity of deciding for himself?

But that he knew would be virtually to abandon the matter altogether. He felt assured, that couched in such terms as was the letter, no man—Lord Fermanagh, least of all—would allow the marriage to proceed.

The very circumstance which justified to himself the resolution he had taken, namely, that of the inequality of fortune, would forbid any man of spirit from suffering his daughter to accept a hand offered under such circumstances.

His hesitations were long and painful; but they ended in a resolution altogether to suppress the letter. How much of good intention—how much of love—how much of honourable sense of the engagements he

had formed, entered into this resolution, you know. But yet, deception is deception, however coloured—To disguise truth even in the least degree is a sort of impiety, from which the soul revolts, and of which it almost inevitably finds reason to repent. Unhappy is the man thus reduced, to choose between two roads, almost equally to be rejected. Each leading he knows not whither, but each seeming too surely to lead to evil.

Whether Edwin was wrong or right, decide for yourselves. He intended rightly; he would not willingly have done wrong, for the universe; but how far our passions mislead us is the question. Did his love mislead him?

“Why do you look so pale, my Edwin? what has happened?” asked Geraldine anxiously, as after an absence of more than two hours, he at last returned home. “Where have you been all this time? I thought you had lost yourself. Nay, but what has happened, for your hair is all in disorder—almost standing on end. If you had seen your wraith, you could scarcely look more scared?”

“Not if I had met my evil genius?” said he, attempting to smile; but he made a poor affair of it. “What o’clock is it?”

“Nearly nine.”

“And what time are we to meet in the chapel to-morrow?”

“At eight, precisely;” put in Mr. Sullivan.

“Eleven hours only!” said he.

And he took a seat by Geraldine, where she was making tea.

“Eleven hours only!” he kept repeating to himself, in an absent manner; “they will soon be over.”

In spite of the resolution he had taken, he felt as if something must arise to snatch her from him yet.

But the hours passed on with that sort of calm, uninterrupted tenor, in one direction, which, with a certain superstition, we think we observe when something is destined, or is *not* to be. From this determined course of circumstances, in one direction, it is almost impossible to avoid drawing an augury as to the future! But,

alas ! that future. How dark—how unintelligible it ever remains !

Some unexpected blow from some totally unthought of quarter, falls suddenly in the midst of the apparent calm, and the whole system of things around us is shattered to atoms in an instant.

The morning so anxiously expected dawned, however, at last ; it was blustering, and cold, and weeping. The wind howled mournfully round the towers of the castle ; the waves of the Atlantic hoarsely echoing upon the shore. Geraldine stood ready to go down to the chapel, looking pale and agitated ; and ah, how beautiful ! Her good aunt, happy and excited, strove to cheer and encourage her with more, if possible, than a mother's kindness.

Lord Fermanagh was grave and melancholy. The aspect of the morning reminded him all too well of another morning—the cold, blustering, weeping morning, when the treasure of his heart was given to another, and the sun of his life went out. And now, upon this morning, his sole other treasure, his loved and lovely daughter was to be given away also. True, in marriage

with one most valued, and only too dear ; but this day is always a sore passage in the father's life—the day when he bestows away the child he loves, and can no longer consider her as his single possession.

Most men, I believe, feel much at this moment ; but Lord Fermanagh had additional causes for depression. He was about to contract an alliance with the son of the man between whom and himself there existed the most fearful causes of enmity. And in spite of all Edwin's assurances, and his own reasonings, there were but too many moments when he doubted whether he was doing either wisely or well. Certainly, nothing but the peculiar circumstances in which he stood, would have tempted him to yield to Edwin's urgency ; but, in truth, so much evil threatened in either alternative, that it was hard to know upon which side the balance inclined. Then the thought of the approaching parting added its weight to the burden on his heart.

He was about to leave his home and the child he loved, to go forth upon a desperate mission, as to the result of which

he saw little to hope and everything to fear; and even the righteousness of which he held in doubt. As a man of sense, he was little satisfied with the policy of the measures adopted. As a man of nice conscience and honour, he could scarcely admit them to be justifiable. As a man of humanity, he shuddered. Strange visions perplexed his mind, of useless bloody contests, ending in dishonourable defeat and death, and the imposition of a still heavier yoke than that his friends were striving to shake off. The miseries of civil contention, the violences, the disorders, the crimes incident to rebellion; the dissolution of all the ties which hold social and moral life together, were ever present to his thoughts.

Lord Fermanagh was no longer the fiery, unthinking Marcus; the discipline of life had, indeed, sobered him; but it had done, alas! far more. Misdirected as he had been, under the influence of corrupt principles of religion; and utterly forsaken, as he had found himself, when, these shackles having been cast off, principles still more perverted had succeeded, the events which

should have resulted in moral chastisement and improvement produced only a kind of universal dislocation of faith and principle. The spirit was broken rather than purified.

As for Edwin, the fearful denunciations of his father's letter were ringing in his ears: his father's threatened curse, like some dark cloud impending in the distance: a cheerless, uncertain, dangerous future hanging over him, and the object of passion!—But then she was his own! Nothing but death could part them now!

Rapture and agony!

He had passed the night in the most harassing alternations of feeling, and he rose in the morning looking so pale and haggard, that as he saw his face reflected in the glass, he absolutely started. Was that the face of a bridegroom? Or was it not his wraith that he saw? as Geraldine had said last night, the prognostication of early death. He strove to shake off his dejection, dressed himself with much care, and as the loud castle-clock rang the quarter to eight, hurried down to the chapel to meet his bride.

There was no one there but the two clergymen. Mr. Sullivan was sitting upon a side bench reading his breviary, and Mr. Johnson was pacing up and down the side-aisle. No one seemed to observe the death-like face of the young man, as he leaned over the rail before the little altar, and suffered his eyes listlessly to wander over the flowers and candlesticks with which it was adorned, the effect of all enhanced by the coloured light which streamed from a representation of the glorious ascension in the window above, now rendered more than usually beautiful by the bright, though watery rays of the morning sun, which fell full upon it. At last eight o'clock struck, and, at the same instant, a door of the chapel which communicated by a flight of stairs to the house opened, and the bride, clad in white, supported by her father, and followed closely by her aunt and a few female attendants, entered the chapel.

And now, as once before, the wind wailed a dismal melody, and the howling blast sang, as it were, a dirge, and clouds overcast the sun, and just as they crossed the threshold, a sudden heavy fall of rain

pattered against the roof and windows—ominous greeting to the fair and innocent creature who was just entering the holy place.

Geraldine was clothed, as I said, in white, and her hair, and face, and the greatest part of her figure were covered with a veil of the richest lace, which was thrown over her head. She leaned for support upon her father's arm; her eyes were cast down, and both father and daughter were too much absorbed by their own emotions to notice the expression of Edwin's face. It was not until the ceremony had commenced and proceeded so far that his trembling hand was placed on hers, that she lifted up her eyes and glanced at him. She turned pale, shocked and terrified at what she beheld. There was a blue, a death-like wanness, a something that struck chill to her young heart. But she looked no more. She dropped her eyes again, and so remained until the Catholic ceremony was concluded.

It was then Mr. Johnson's turn, and he took Mr. Sullivan's place, and proceeded to read the affecting service of the Church

of England. And then the lovers exchanged the sweet and tender vows, and kneeled together in truthful solemn prayer asking the best of blessings,—grace to ensure a faithful discharge of reciprocal duties. And sweet, holy tears came to the relief of each, and as they fell like dew upon their bosoms, whilst the solemn rite was being concluded, they both felt comforted.

The *felt* presence of a higher power—of mercy, truth, and goodness all-pervading, seemed to steal over both, as they rose from their knees. He exchanged with her a tender and solemn embrace,—heart to heart—and then her father kissed her; and Edwin saluted the good Chanoinesse, and the party left the chapel. The priest and the clergyman following last of all, engaged together in friendly conversation.

It was a quiet, peaceful breakfast which succeeded. Everybody seemed more at ease now the ceremony was actually concluded, for the assurance that the union so much desired was irrevocably complete seemed to lift a load from every heart.

Lord Fermanagh, now that his daughter was safe under Edwin's protection, seemed altogether to forget the pain of having given her away; and the severance once made, rejoiced in the prospect and forgot the past.

Edwin was, upon his side, relieved from a whole host of conflicting feelings. What was done, was done; it was useless—nay, wrong, now, to look back. His duty was plain before him now—to cast his lot with her he had chosen, and abide the consequences of what he had decided upon. And light enough seemed any consequences now they no longer included the possibility of a separation.

The nervous agitations of Geraldine subsided now the ceremony was over. Her aunt was all bustle and pleasure; her dear Mr. Sullivan looked well satisfied, and Mr. Johnson was all courtesy.

After breakfast, Lord Fermanagh and Mr. Sullivan set forward together. Lord Fermanagh in so much better spirits than usual, that it completed his daughter's happiness. Mr. Johnson soon afterwards took his leave; and then the lovers were

left with the good aunt, to the felicity of each other's society.

A few days of unmixed happiness succeeded, and, in the fulness of his happiness, Edwin altogether forgot his many causes for anxiety. But the respite was not long. The snake was scotched, not killed; and too soon the secret hidden within his own breast began to resume its power to canker and torment. Alas! it was like the worm which dieth not. There it lay,—this hidden anxiety, gnawing at his heart-strings.

The first internal debate with himself arose upon the subject of how best he should communicate what had been done to his father. Whether to cast himself at once upon his mercy, endeavour to soften him by prayers and representations, and obtain from his tenderness a reversal of his commands, before he ventured to announce that those commands had been disobeyed. Or should he at once boldly confess what he had done, and assert his right to self-guidance in a matter such as this? This last measure looked so like setting his father at open defiance, that he could scarcely endure the thoughts of it.

He inclined much more to the other plan of proceeding. Yet truth and sincerity, open conduct, and undisguised action, had been the leading principle of his life. Never was character less formed to play a double part. Deception in its least inexcusable form was abhorrent to his very nature—And yet, what had he done? He had involved himself in a maze of deceptions—had committed something very nearly approaching to positive deceit. And now, what was to be done? He hesitated; he could not bring himself to a decision.

Day passed over day, and still found the duty of writing to his father undischarged, and as each day passed over his head, he became more nervous, anxious, and irresolute. It seemed as if he had lost the power of determining for himself, whilst every day as he read and re-read his father's letter, the sentences seemed to grow more threatening. Or, what was still more tormenting, to change their meaning altogether—To assume a kind of fantastic meaning. It was as if the words dazzled and doubled before his eyes. He seemed to lose the power to take them in their

natural form and force—to decide upon their real import.

A much longer time than ought to have been allowed to pass slipped away in this manner. At last he forced himself to write.

It was a very touching letter. Imploring his father in the most tender terms to rescind his sentence. He urged his own devoted attachment; the position in which he had placed himself—the happiness of another and his own honour at stake;—he appealed to all that he believed to be generous in his father's heart. How did Randal Langford meet the appeal?

CHAPTER XV.

Curses upon thee, thou art not my child !

LONGFELLOW.

SEVERAL weeks had elapsed ; till weeks had become months. At last the bolt fell.

The marriage had taken place in April. Communications, as I have told you, were slow, and the increasing disorders of the country had rendered them at this time still more tedious and uncertain. So it was June before Edwin's letter was received at Ravenscliffe. But another had preceded it. A letter from Mr. Grogan had arrived. This gentleman had, some way or other, obtained information of the event which had taken place at the Castle, and had written to inform his sister of what had passed.

It was not till the middle of the month of August that Edwin received a letter from his father, in reply to his own of June. After the reception of which, all intercourse ceased between them.

It was about the latter end of November that a second letter arrived at Ravenscliffe, addressed to Mr. Langford, and bearing the post-mark of Cahir. I have omitted to tell you, that a well-intentioned lad of about Edwin's age, who had been a sort of humble companion to the two brothers since childhood, and had served Edwin ever since he had grown up in the joint capacity of groom and valet, had followed him to Ireland, and attended him ever since. The address of the letter was in this young man's hand.

"A letter from Ireland," observed Mrs. Langford, who had opened the post-bag; looking with a certain jealousy at it as she spoke,—“but the direction is not in Edwin's hand.”

“I should suppose not,” said Mr. Langford, coldly. “The last words he and I shall ever exchange have passed

between us. But, is the letter for me? Give it me."

"Whose hand-writing is this?" he cried, and he turned suddenly pale; and began to tremble.

"Oh! it's impossible to say? But I do wish, my dearest Mr. Langford, that you would not suffer your feelings to be so easily excited. Indeed you suffer greatly upon this occasion. More than almost any other man would have allowed himself to do. It will be the death of you, I see. Pray—pray try to rouse yourself, and shake it off.—Priest, give your father a glass of wine."

"Priest, keep your seat!" cried Mr. Langford, imperiously.

The young man, looking as he ever did like a meek sufferer, obeyed and sat still.

"Poor Priest!" in a low voice was let fall by Mrs. Langford; but the words were so distinctly pronounced that each syllable was heard through the room,—though, as it was to seem, not so intended.

Mr. Langford glanced up from the letter he was contemplating, as if smitten for a moment by a sense of his own injustice. He looked towards the place where Priest sat—and oh, dreadful! even at that very moment he felt as if he loathed him—He did, however, so much violence to himself—as to say, in a voice which he strove to render affectionate, something about some little business or other which he wished Priest to execute; and then he rose, and, carrying the unopened letter with him, left the room.

“He hates me,” said Priest.

“No, no! No such thing. Don’t fancy it. A partial father he has ever been—But after the magnificent proof he has given of the esteem in which he holds your duty and obedience—don’t go and say such things as that.—You shouldn’t, Priest—indeed you shouldn’t.”

“He hates me—He loathes me—He detests me! I see it in every glance of his dark, malignant eye,—hear it in every tone of his harsh voice. He hates me!

He hated me from my cradle!—he will hate me to his or my grave. His severity made me a miserable boy; his injustice a miserable youth; his aversion will make me a bad man! It is too late now. Even this magnificent proof of esteem—as you call it, mother—what is it but that he makes me the instrument of his revenge? Revenge! It may be the ungrateful disobedient fellow deserves it. But what of that?—He doats upon him and detests me.”

“Hush, hush! dearest Priest, I cannot bear to hear you go on so.—What if it should ever come to your father’s ears?”

“And if it did! what harm could it do?—He is quite as much in my power as I am in his.—His blind hatred has made the poor slighted son his master. How is he to have revenge upon his enemy but through poor Priest?” with a bitter emphasis upon the two last words.

“Well, perhaps, it may be as you say, but it is better to be upon one’s guard. Your father is a man of violent passions, and *never* forgives.”

“ I know it—I know it ! You need not tell me of *that*—I depend upon *that*. Much better depend upon his bad feelings than upon his good ones, mother. I trust to them—I hold by them—and I know they, at least, will not deceive me. Men never get the better of their faults—they are always constant in their faults ! Evil tempers are permanent things,—one may depend upon them ! I am the instrument of his indulgence in a diabolical hatred—and he could as soon cut off his right hand as do without me—I tell you.”

“ But you may be too secure.—I tell *you*, Priest, that I know your father well. And the worst of it, and what renders it so difficult to manage him is, that there are two men in him.”

“ Well, and if there be—do I not do everything I can think of to oblige and flatter the other man ?—And with all his stern self - dependence, I know no one more open to flattery than my worthy father.”

“ How you do talk ! Really Priest, you quite shock me.—Indeed you do.—And after all he has done for you, son.”

“All he has done for *me* ! I tell you I owe him and will pay him no thanks for all that he has done ! Yes, I should thank him if it were done for *me*—if one single item of all these things were done out of love for *me*—But I am not such a dupe as that. He hates me, I tell you—he loathes me. His black eye ! Do you think I have no sympathy by which to read it ? I’ve got the same eye—at least, so my flatterers tell me—who would fain persuade me, and perhaps him, that there is more of his own son in me, than in that other ! Yes, I’ve got his eye—his black eye !—and who knows ? perhaps a drop of blood out of his bad black heart.”

Mrs. Langford was now really shocked ; coarse as was her nature, she was really dreadfully shocked.

“ Priest, Priest, what *are* you saying ? How shockingly, how ungratefully you are talking. Don’t, for heaven’s sake ! let me hear such sentiments again ; or I shall be extremely angry—extremely displeased with you.”

“ One is tired of for ever dissembling,”

said her son, with a wearied, disgusted look; "tired of the pretences of domestic piety—tired of outward civility and inward aversion. My father feels it as well as I do. *He* lets it out, now and then, to my face in the abrupt, rough words that escape him. I do the same by him behind his back—You would not have me say all this to himself, I suppose? But I feel," he went on, with increasing bitterness, "that I should get perfectly steeped in falsehood,—blackened over—blacker than hell itself with deceit, if I did not unburden my heart now and then! And I never do it, but to you, mother."

"Well, well; so far, so good.—That is right and prudent, at all events; you know you are safe with me.—And now you have had it out, and relieved yourself—take another glass of wine, and go and talk over what your father desired you to do with old Griffiths. It looks well, and gives me pleasure, to see you employed by your father in this way, and exercising some authority. You know, in ancient times, kings, as they advanced in years, used to share their thrones with

their next heirs during their lifetime—and your father grows old—he is much worn. So pray, now, Priest, do as I bid you.”

“Do I not always do as you bid me? There; give me a good large glass of malmsey to drive the black vapours out of my head. Bravo, mother! You do know how to fill a bumper. And so, here’s to your good health! And now for the faithful Griffiths.”

Mr. Langford had in the mean time seated himself in his study, and after a little hesitation had opened the ill-folded missive, and thus had read:

“HONOURED SIR,—May I make bold to address you? because, imprimis,—my dear young master, to my certain knowledge, has written to you many letters. But since that one which came to him somewhere upon the latter end of August, he does not seem to have had the heart to write again. But he has gone on drooping and drooping, till the dear young mistress and I do not know well what to do with him. For it seems all as

one as if his heart was broken, and the very spring of youth, as one may say, snapped in two.

“ I am in hopes, sir, you will excuse the boldness I am taking leave to use; but I am very much afraid, from little things I have overheard. . . . You know, I hope, honoured sir, that I am not by nature an eavesdropper or a keyhole-listener—but when one loves, as I do, a dear young master, some way one can’t help having one’s eyes about ’em, or I should say one’s ears,—and so, if I may take the liberty to express my opinion, all the reason why my fine young master, who was, you know, such a bold-spirited young man, is all so changed drooping, and withered like is, honoured sir, that something is amiss between him and you. And he can’t get over it, and that’s the truth.

“ There was a something in that August letter—and oh, Mr. Langford, sir! what could it be?—I am sure, if you could be here, it would go to your very heart to see how he’s taken it to his’n. And you’d write him a kind, fatherly line or

so, I am sure you would, sir, to cheer him up a bit. For, truth to tell, Mr. Edwin loves you very much indeed, sir; and your displeasure goes, and always has, very sore with him. What he has ever done to deserve it, hang me whether I or any one else can tell! save, to be sure, in the gamekeeper's affair, and he *meant* it for the best, Mr. Langford, indeed he did—make yourself sure of it.

“And now, honoured sir, without further prefaces, these lines is to tell you that I thinks very badly of my young master, for he pines like; and it's a bad thing when a young man takes to pine. As the old butler here was a-saying, only yesterday, shaking his head, and telling as how he didn't like it, and couldn't understand it. And I made bold to speak with Mr. O'Ferrol, who's horse-leech and apothecary here, and comes up to the Castle now and then; and he says, says he,—it's his very words, sir, as near as I can call them to mind,—‘I'd have you look sharp after the young master,’ says he, ‘Thomas, for sure as you're alive, he's in a bad way. He's got something preying on his heart;’

“These were his very words, except the Irish way, which I can’t justly render ; ‘and it’s my wonder,’ says he, ‘with such a sweet young lady for his wife, and rich, and all that. I don’t see my way into it, but there’s a something on his heart—and if you don’t circumvent them as laid it there, and get it off by hook or by crook, take my word for it you’ll see what you don’t like—and no very long time to, either. For, if he don’t be going fast into a hatrophy,’ (was it ? I can’t make sure of the word) ‘never trust Morgan O’Ferrol again,’ says he. ‘And there’s only one door out of that same,’ he says, ‘and that’s the one through which a man goes heels foremost.’

“And so, honoured sir, presenting my humble duty to all, and hoping it will please your honour’s worship to take these poor lines into your consideration, and to write what is comforting to your dear son,

“I remain,

“Your obedient servant to command,

“THOMAS ANDERSON.

“P.S. It strikes me, if it is not too

great a liberty to take, that if you should see fit to ask him and my beautiful young lady to pay a visit to Ravenscliffe, native air might set all right. I shall never forget the tone in which he said but last night, when I was a talking and saying as how Ravenscliffe air was the thing for him, 'I shall never see Ravenscliffe again, Thomas, in this life.' It brought the tears to my eyes, through I don't know what in the way he said this."

How far Randal might or might not be touched by this simple letter remained a secret between himself and his own heart. He suffered no sign of relenting to escape him, after he had received it, yet the paleness of his cheek, his red and gloomy eye, and the restlessness with which he wandered from one place to another — now under the raven's-tree, which for years he had not been known to visit—now up and down the path by the river,—showed that some secret but desperate struggle was going on within.

There was, indeed. His affection for his son, all his tender recollections of the ever, ever loved mother, only exasperating the bitterness of the idea, that both by son and mother he had been alike betrayed, and in the same cruel way—The fealty of the heart—affections, far warmer than those ever bestowed upon him—being given to his enemy,—his insulting, detested enemy.

Day passed over day in this strife of feelings; but, alas! as the hours fled on, it seemed as if what was still left of kind and human in his heart passed away with them. His resentment seemed to deepen, his bitter sense of injury to darken all his softer feelings.

Better would it have been to let his feelings take words, and exhaust themselves with their own violence, than thus smouldering in secret to consume all that was yet left of good in his heart. Randal Langford, however, remained inexorably silent. And it is certain, also, that absence, the fatal foe to good understanding, and the length of time that had been spent in the indulgence of the most

unjustifiable feelings, had greatly tended to harden him.

He was able to persuade himself that the letter of good Thomas was probably a very exaggerated representation of the true state of the case, till by degrees the uneasiness which had at first arisen at the account of his son's health, and apprehension as to the effect which the unqualified sentence of disinheritance he had passed, might have produced, died away.

He had trembled when first he read the simple account of its effect upon a character so susceptible as that of Edwin thus deprived of his birthright, and rendered henceforward an alien and a stranger in his father's house, and he had shuddered at the unnatural severity of his proceeding. But these better feelings were transient, those more habitually indulged got the mastery; and, above all, that vile one of suspicion, which led him altogether to overlook the simplicity and artlessness visible in every word of the young man's narration, and to look upon it all as but an attempt to play upon his feelings.

And so week passed after week, spent in moody resolves not to give way, and, in a state of gloomy, irritated dissatisfaction with himself and every one around him, until the very light of day, and the presence of any member of his family, seemed loathsome.

Week succeeded to week until they in their turn amounted to months; and it was upon a desolate March morning, the wind wailing, and hail and sleet beating against the windows of the study in which, with a more than usual sense of desolation of the heart, he was sitting alone, that his servant entered with the letters, saying, that the state of the roads and badness of the weather had somewhat delayed the messenger.

There was, as usual, a considerable number of miscellaneous letters, which Mr. Langford took with an air of indifference, and began to sort in his hand. As he did so, his eyes and hands were suddenly arrested. There was one; it bore the post-mark of Cahir; it had a black seal. He tore it open; it was as

before, in the hand of Thomas Anderson, and ran thus :

THOMAS ANDERSON TO MR. LANGFORD.

“HONOURED SIR, — I feared, and I hoped as how you had not got my last; for if your honour did get my last, and saw not fit to write a comforting line to my poor young master, I doubt it will go very sorely with your father’s heart now.

“Sir, my young master got no better, as how should he? but worse and worse; and at last, honoured sir,—for some way or other poor servants learn everything I think as happens in the family,—it comes to my ears what was the matter; and as how my dear blessed young master was—*disinherited*. I did not wonder after that for his pale looks and loss of appetite.

“Not that he ever was greedy or covetous of worldly gain, poor young man,—never heart purer from such. Noble and generous as the open day was he, and never had anything but others must share. But, sir, the estate!—The fine old family estate of Ravenscliffe, and the farms, and

the woods, and the house of his fathers, and the old gray tower, and the raven's tree,—you know, sir, he had loved these things like friends from a boy upwards, and always had been used and told, from a mere babby in the cradle, as one may say, that these were in time's course to succeed to him, as they had done to his honoured father before him, when *his* honoured father—Mr. Edwin's grandfather, I mean—was laid in his grave, going the way of all living.

“And it can't be, sir, it's not in nature. When a young man's mind and heart have been reared in these things—grown together from his long clothes as I may say,—why they get to be a part of his life—a part of himself—a part of his mind—a portion of his heart;—and you can't, sir, no you can't—especially in such a loving, cleaving nature as was Mr. Edwin's,—you can't rend them asunder but you let out the life too,—you can't indeed, sir. It's with the tears dropping fast upon the paper that I write it; for, next to my dear young master, and my dear, dear, sweet pretty mistress, my

heart bleeds for you, honoured sir, and for *your* torn heart when you know all.

“I hoped my young lady, his sweet, sweet wife, and the prospect of a little one, which there is, would rouse and comfort him; but someway things in this world don’t always justly produce the effects as we expect from them. And far from the sight of my young lady being a comforter, as it should have been, to think of her only seemed to make his sorrow as regarded you and Ravenscliffe the harder to bear.

“I’ve seen her,—for whilst he was ill I was so much about him, that I heard and saw more than others,—and I only make bold to tell it to you, sir, because I know it must interest you; but all these things are holy secrets with me for every one in the world besides, believe me, sir, upon my honour true.

“I’ve seen that sweet young lady sitting by him hours and hours when he has been in his low moods, taking his hand and keeping pressing it, and smiling so sweetly in his face, and trying to comfort him, and saying,—‘My dear Edwin—how can you,

my own Edwin?—Sure it is nothing but world's goods after all, and what are they to the treasure of the heart?—Sure is not our love better than houses and lands to us both? I am certain it is to me,—will you not let it be so to you? Hard it is. Oh! don't think I do not feel it for you—but—'

“ ‘I have ruined you, my angel, and what will your father say? Remorse of conscience is added to my sense of the cruelty of a father whom I have ever loved and honoured beyond expression. I did wrong, I did wrong by Lord Fermanagh, your high and honourable father. He will despise me, and I deserve to be despised; and to my selfish, short-sighted passion I have sacrificed his daughter and himself,—trusting me as he did, too!—oh, Geraldine! Geraldine!’ Something of this sort, I don't exactly know what, stuck by him in this way.

“ But when it was known that my sweet young lady was about to present him with a little one,—a prospect, we all hoped, would restore his spirits—all young men are pleased with expectation of an heir,—then he got rapidly worse.

“After that, he took on dreadfully when he was alone, as I had occasion by accident to find out, though he strove more than he had done before to keep up a cheerfuller face before my young lady. But it would not do. I’ve seen him, when I’ve been waiting behind her chair, opposite to him at dinner, look up across the table suddenly at her, and then turn pale as ashes, as if he went sick at once, and lay down his knife and fork; and, for love or money, not be persuaded to swallow one morsel more.

“And so it went on day by day; and some way, when one sees a person every day, one does not seem aware how they get worse and worse by degrees. One so loves to flatter oneself, I suppose, that they are doing a little better. And Lord Fermanagh has been away all this time,—never once home since the wedding.

“Well, sir, I seem to lose myself; I crave your pardon for my poor way of writing; but at last, from weaker to weaker, he took to his bed. And he did not lie long, sir, there, for he had kept up as well as he could. But it *was* a

sight for tears that last night, sir. My poor young lady, looking more dead than alive, with her white lips and livid cheeks, sitting there supporting his head under her arm, and the other hand in his, and looking in his eyes, searching for hope it seemed like; and poor Madam, her aunt, in the easy chair at the foot of the bed, crying as if her heart would break; and I, poor fool, blubbering behind the curtain.

“And so, he’s dead! yes, sir, your son is dead!”

He got on so far; with a sort of hurried, greedy impatience, he read on. But as his eyes met the fatal line, something within the strong man’s heart seemed to give way, and he fell down senseless upon the floor.

CHAPTER XVI.

Glimmer as funereal lamps
Amid the chills and damps
Of the vast plain where death encamps.

LONGFELLOW.

YOUR son is dead! yes, your son is dead! In the pride and hardness of your implacable heart, you have killed him.

Yes, he is dead; and death is a terrible thing. In the grave all is buried; in the grave all is silent. There comes no echo from the grave.

Yes; bow down your humbled, hoary head, and weep, weep, weep; but you weep in vain. Your tears cannot reach him; your too late remorse cannot atone to him. He hears not your groans; he knows not of your late repentance. Too.

late, too late ; you can do nothing for him more.

The Father of life bestowed upon you the precious gift, that you might cherish it, and treasure it, and tend it ; and with the warmth of a father's love, and under the shelter of a father's protection, call forth the rich promise of blossoms, and ripen them into fruit. But what have you done ? He has resumed His gift, and what have *you* done ?

Did you play the father's part ? Did you cherish the good, the generous, the brave, and the true, that lay there, in that most precious promise ? No !

Did you awaken fond affection by bestowing fond affection ? Did you strengthen desert by rewarding desert ? Did you arrest error by gently correcting error ? No !

What have you done ? Thought only of self—mean, base self. Sacrificed to self all that was due to the eternal laws which sever right from wrong ; called that right which ministered to your selfish, domineering, arbitrary pride ; that wrong, which dared to contradict it. That wrong, which strove to soften your wicked hatred

of a fellow-creature; and to that fiend, your hatred, have sacrificed your son—your boy. Such a son! Such a boy!

But it is too late now—the sentence has passed now. The irreversible doom is gone forth. He is gone “where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest;” he is gone to God! The veil of the flesh has burst asunder, and he is gone to his Creator—and you!—miserable, miserable man, you remain in the outer, utter darkness.

Oh! weeping and gnashing of teeth is there!

No one felt for him—no one understood his deep misery but Emma; for he was jealous of his misery. It was to him a sacred, hallowed thing; he could not endure to pollute his sincere but most bitter tears with the conventional sympathies of sighs and sables. Buried in his study, or walking far away from all in his deep silent woods, so the wretched father passed his days. He avoided his family; he refused to join in the usual meals; he

barred his door against his wife, against her son, against every one but Emma.

Did he in secret resent the part Mrs. Langford had played? Did he recollect all the malignant insinuations veiled under her hypocritical pretences? Could he trace the course of that venom which had been distilled, drop by drop, into his mind? I know not. I know not whether his mind, broken, lacerated, ruined as it was, had sufficient power of continued reflection left, to retrace the past. The horror, and distress, and desolation of the present, absorbed all.

The disgust the living son and the living mother inspired seemed rather one of wild despairing contrast between that which had been and that which was, than arising from any definite or seasonable cause. But Emma—upon her cheek there were the traces of honest tears. In her eyes he had long been accustomed to read, in place of the insinuated flatteries of her brother, honest censure, and honest anxiety. She had had the courage, once or twice, to confront him in his rage, and to plead for the absent, for

justice, and for mercy. He would not hear her then. He had spurned her away in a rage then; but all was changed now. His son was dead—the dear, the loved offender—the object of such jealous heart-burning and stern condemnation, was no more; he could not offend again; he was silent and dead.

And he remembered what Emma had said and done; and now when she knocked gently at his study-door, and he asked sternly who was there, and she answered, in her kind, mellow voice—“Emma,” he rose and opened it, and did that, which never since he had been a father he had yet done, unclosed his arms to his child, and clasped her to his heart.

Yes, God is very merciful! Rarely, indeed, does He leave even the worst of us, bereaved of all. Rarely does he leave the vilest criminal utterly deserted, and alone; and where there is a mixture of qualities,—vestiges of a better nature yet to be traced—oh, He is a Father and a Saviour where there is no other Father, no other Saviour. He breaks not the bruised reed, quenches not the smoking

flax; I have seen it hundreds and hundreds of times in my short and circumscribed career.

There was one sincere, spontaneous, single, disinterested heart, yet left amid the general wreck. One generous, brave, loving creature that had sprung up, and been matured, no one knew how, like a wild flower in the wilderness, nurtured by the breath of God, that breathes in the pure winds of heaven, and fed with that dew, that manna, which is the bread divine. Yes, in His beneficence and His great mercy, this one—this last, last gift, He had reserved; now, in the hour of his uttermost need, to bestow it upon this perverted and wretched, yet not utterly lost one—and, blessing of blessings—He gave to him a softened heart, a heart to receive and treasure it.

Emma's head rested upon her father's bosom, and her tears fell fast, whilst his own ran down his cheeks in torrents, and wetted the raven hair, which, dark as his own, lay scattered against his breast.

So they wept long.

Then Emma, simple and true—no scene-

maker, no yielder to useless regrets or exaggerated emotions, but a sincere and earnest wrestler with herself and her own passions, whether of sorrow or of joy—a wholesome child of daily life, and daily goodness, exertion, and care—spoke—not like a heroine in a tragic romance, but like a tender, loving child, and girl as she was, and said—will you call it bathos?—

“Dear papa! dinner is ready; do come, and try to eat a little dinner.”

“I cannot eat anything, Emma; do not ask me; food would not do for me just now. Go to your own dinner, child; and when it is over, come again and sit a little with me—will you, Emma?”

“Let me stay now. Won’t you let me stay now? I don’t want any dinner,” said Emma.

“No, my dear; go to table, and when it is over, come again.”

She simply took his hand, and touched it with her lips, and instantly left the room.

She went at once to dinner. Her mother and Priest were there, with long-

drawn faces, looking excessively wo begone. It is possible that they might feel some natural stings of compunction ; but if they did, the appearance of them was quite smothered up in this affectation of sorrow and mourning.

Nobody eat that day but Emma. Priest and Mrs. Langford both sent away their plates. Indeed, their faces were so long-drawn, and fixed in such sorrowful mould, that the muscles would seem to refuse themselves to the exercise of eating.

Emma soon finished her meal, and then rose from table.

“Where are you going, Emma ?”

“To my father. He bade me come when I had done dinner.”

“It is vain for me to take him anything, I fear ;” said Mrs. Langford. “Indeed, few could taste a morsel upon this deplorable day. My dearest Priest, you are too much affected. We must all part, sooner or later. A few years more, or less, that is all ; and your brother is in a far happier place than this sad, sad world. Let me get you something.—A little mulled Madeira, and a morsel of thin, dry toast,

could you fancy?—My dear boy, you will make yourself quite ill.”

Emma had already left the room. The silver saucepan was rung for, and brought; and the mother and son comforted themselves, as well as they could, with a little warm potation, under the grief they felt themselves obliged to display.

Emma returned to her father. She found him more composed. He was walking up and down his study, so she went and put her arm through his, and spoke not one word; but kept walking up and down—up and down with him; and he understood her sympathy, and every now and then gently pressed her arm to his side. And so they kept walking up and down I know not how long, and then the evening began to close in; and Emma gently let go her father’s arm, and drew the curtains over his windows; for it looked so black and dreary out of doors; and then she lighted the fire, which was laid within the grate, and the two candles upon the mantel-piece. Her father, meanwhile, having seated himself in his arm-chair, seemed to watch with something like in-

terest, her light and noiseless proceedings. And then she stepped out of the room, and presently returned with his own china cup filled with tea, and a morsel or two of thin bread and butter upon a plate, and presented it to him, just as if it had been a matter of course.

He swallowed the tea, and said, "Thank you, Emma;" but gently repulsed her when she offered the bread and butter; so she set it down, and placed herself in a chair near the fire, and began to arrange the fuel a little, and to busy herself about it; and then she stole about the room, and put that little matter to rights, or this; and he watched her, and felt he was not alone; and yet that he was not compelled to utter a word, or to feel the awkwardness of being silent. And so passed away, over the soul of Randal Langford, this awful first day of a never-ending sorrow.

As he took up his candle to retire to his own room, he stooped down, and kissed his daughter, and just said, "Good night, my love!"

The tenderest word he had ever in his life spoken to her, and so went up-stairs,

and to his own chamber, which had many years been a solitary one, locked his door, and passed that night. How?

Time presses, and space is exhausted, and I must hurry to the conclusion of this history of the strivings and strugglings of undisciplined and misdirected feelings. Acute sensibilities, which should have impelled to the noblest virtues, fatally perverted to prove the source of such dreadful wrong.

There are periods in many a man's life, when events crowd one upon another with astonishing rapidity. Death follows death with fearful speed. Times when a man looks awe-struck round the hearth, so lately crowded with happy faces, and beholds a desert!

"And how many children have I left?" was the fearful question of the heart-struck father, when the cruel scourge of putrid scarlet fever had swept through his nursery.

One sometimes, in glancing over the obituary of a newspaper, starts to see one,

two, three, four—I know not how many—of one home and one family, included in a brief sentence—all gone at once!

Randal Langford and Emma are seated opposite to each other by the fire in the large drawing-room. They are clothed in the deepest mourning. They are the only two of the name of Langford left living in the house. The scarlet fever has been *there*, and the mother and the son are both dead, and they were buried together this very morning.

It was awful!

And father and daughter, as they sat opposite to each other, looked almost like the spectres of themselves,—white, ashy pale, bloodless, colourless, as it is said those look who have gone through that fate a million times worse than any death—been buried by mistake in a trance, and have been brought out of the coffin alive.

Their eyes were glazed, and with a scared expression, as if they had not had time to recover from the distraction of

the preceding fortnight—Six days, say rather—for the fever had been as rapid as it had been violent in its effects. Three or four days only, and Priest and his mother were both dead.

The house was profoundly quiet; the very servants stole about like ghosts. Horror was written in every face. The state of the dead under the frightful visitation of putrid scarlet fever had rendered a speedy funereal a matter of absolute necessity. The whole had passed over like the blast of the simoon in the desert,—and it was over!

Yes, they are all gone; both your sons are now gone—the wronged and the favoured—the disinherited and the appointed heir. And now before you is seated the last of your house—a woman; and with her the long-descended name of Langford shall be extinguished, and the dearly-prized inheritance pass away.

“Emma,” Randal said, after they had sat in this dreary silence some time—
“Emma, you are now the sole representative of this time-honoured family. You are the heir, in the place of your

brother.—Come here, child, and sit down nearer to me; I cannot very well see you, where you are.—Has the evening fallen suddenly, or are my eyes becoming dim? It is not with weeping, Emma; I sometimes wish I could shed tears. It is that the true light of my eyes is extinguished.—That is the way some of your pretty, fanciful poetisers would express it, I suppose.”

“Dear papa, this has been a fearful, fearful day for you; but it is over, and now you will be better. I know you will be better,” said she, drawing her chair nearer to his, and trying to look cheerfully and affectionately, as if endeavouring to brighten the clouded countenance, and warm the chilled heart with the rays from her own glowing soul.

There was a light within which beamed bright for her—the generous warmth of a loving, grateful piety. She believed in God—she loved God—she had faith in God; and there was the light and the life within her, such as those alone who believe, and love, and trust in God, can experience. And now, pale and sallow

as was her cheek—clouded over as she looked, her dark complexion cast into deepest shadow by the sable dress she wore, and which was not relieved by the slightest particle of white,—her eyes, those speaking, honest eyes, shone bright and lustrous still, and upon her mouth was a smile like that of a pitying seraph.

“You will be better, dearest papa; the worst is over.”

“Yes, Emma, quite over—irrevocably over. Time, it is said, helps every one in such cases, but I feel that he will forget to help me.”

“It is not, indeed,” she said, falteringly, “a case for Time—I did not mean Time—There are wounds too deep to be healed by Time.”

“You trust in God!” he said, rather harshly; “it is well for *you*.”

“I do trust in God!” she answered, fervently; “We must all trust in Him; and that it is, dear, dear father, which must, and will be your comfort at last.”

“I have a pretty heart to carry before your God,” said he with bitterness; “your Saviour taught us to——”

“Love one another,” said Emma.

“He should have made it possible, then,” was the almost blasphemous reply.

Emma was sorry; but she was not, as many good people would have been, very much shocked,—at least, she could not help being shocked, but took the utmost pains to hide it. She knew that her father’s heart was utterly estranged from all those ideas which were the treasure of her own existence. She did not expect to gather grapes from thorns, nor olives from the wild ungrafted olive-tree.

The task she had proposed to herself required circumspection and patience, but she would accomplish it. She had faith and trust — sooner or later she should accomplish it. It was a labour of love,—difficult and delicate the task; but she had made up her own mind, come what would, to accomplish it.

“I believe,” she said in a very gentle and humble tone of voice, “that with *His* grace all things are possible.”

“To love our enemies, for instance,” he answered with a sneer; then, still more sneeringly, “Emma, that text is not

unknown to me. I have heard it in its turn at church, and I have often reflected upon it.—To me it appears as difficult—as out of nature—as far beyond the powers of humanity to effect it—as to open the eyes of him who was born blind.”

She was silent, she knew not exactly what to say next.

“I am a heart-broken man, aged before my time; chastened—I hope, amended in many things, I would fain believe. But one feeling remains unalterable. It has attended me through life; it will soothe or scatter thorns upon my pillow when I die . . . Say no more about it. You are a good girl, Emma, a courageous girl, and you intend well, but in pursuing this good intention,” lowering his voice, and his face assuming an almost terrific expression, “beware how you trench upon one subject. Beard the lion in his fury if you will, but not your father, under the frenzy of *one* thought.”

They were each of them silent for some time after this, but the outburst of feeling seemed to have done him some good, the deep cloud on his countenance lifted a

little, and after about half an hour, in which they had continued to sit together without speaking, he said, suddenly,—
“ Emma, you are now my sole heir ! ”

She glanced up at him, slightly shaking her head.

“ Emma, I repeat it, *you* are now the sole heir of Ravenscliffe. If I had possessed collateral relations, I should not have sacrificed your interests to the pride of a name, for I esteem you, Emma ; you are a brave and true-hearted creature—but I have no near male relations—Ravenscliffe is yours, and it will not be long—or my presentiments deceive me—before you will be called upon to enter into possession.”

“ Father, we will talk of these things another day. This is too holy an evening to talk over matters relating to mere empty, vain, earthly possessions—Before the terrible reality of the grave, it shocks me—it is painful to me.”

“ Right, my dear, we will speak of these things a few days hence.”

“ May I read to you ? Is there anything you would like to hear read ? ”

“Where is the newspaper? Yes, read me last night’s debate; I have heard nothing lately, and yet the world moves rapidly forwards—And what news of those demons of the Convention? And what of——”

“The Irish rebellion,” he was going to say, but it seemed as if even to articulate the mere name of Ireland was repugnant to his feelings.

“I will read the papers for the last week consecutively, and then we shall be *au courant* as to what is going on,” she said, striving to rally her spirits. Wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove, was the clever and generous-hearted girl.

CHAPTER XVII.

And to exalt the passing hour;
Oh soothe it, with a healing power
Drawn from the sacrifice fulfill'd.

WORDSWORTH.

AT the time of Edwin's death, Emma had written to Geraldine. Her letter was warm-hearted, frank, and affectionate, bearing the assurances of her sisterly love and friendship, and of the interest she took in herself, and the being yet unborn, still lying in the poor widowed one's bosom.

A correspondence had thus sprung up between the two sisters, and without having met they had become, in the course of it, thoroughly endeared to each other. Each feeling, I believe, as if she understood the other perfectly.

Geraldine gave birth to a son. Her letters after that became still more and more confidential, and were still more and more pervaded with anxiety and sadness; for events in Ireland were beginning to assume the most alarming aspect. Lord Fermanagh did not return, and the poor, young, deserted mother was left to the lonely solitude of his castle, in company only with her aunt and Mr. Sullivan.

Emma had soon become deeply interested for them all; but her interests were still more engaged for her father, whose agonies of mind—what between remorse at his own severity, and that undying enmity against Lord Fermanagh, which every melancholy event, as it occurred, seemed only to increase—were terrible.

From the time the infant son of Edwin had been born, his fate had become a new subject of interest and anxiety to Emma. According to all the ideas of justice in families where the rights of primogeniture have been for generations maintained, this infant was the rightful heir of Ravenscliffe. But this subject, like almost every other which concerned this divided family, raised

a very painful contest between conflicting feelings and duties.

Her brother had been declared his father's heir. She knew how passionately, wrongly or rightly, her mother clung to the idea of seeing her son succeed to his father; and there was something in the thought of attempting to reverse her father's decision in his favour, and this only for the sake of an unknown infant, very painful to her. Many were the anxious questionings which arose as between the right and the kind, which held her heart and judgment in painful suspense.

The law of primogeniture itself, being a mere law of convention, and not founded upon the indefeasible rights of human nature, appeared to be one that might, without manifest injustice, under certain circumstances, be put aside. The wrong that had struck her so forcibly, over which she had mourned so deeply, was that suffered by Edwin himself; and this not so much because he was the heir by birth, but because he by his merits so undeniably deserved to inherit those privileges to which the accident of his birth seemed to

entitle him; and in these she had, to her grief, seen him artfully supplanted by another. Supplanted was the word which would run in her mind. She tried to view it otherwise, to hope it was otherwise,—that her eyes were jaundiced by prejudice, but she could not shake off the painful idea.

But now Edwin was no more; and in his place stood a little unborn infant. So long as the sex of that infant remained undetermined, Priest, under every consideration, was certainly the heir; and even when a son was born,—a stranger to them all,—not only the child of a stranger, but the direct descendant of one who had proved himself her father's bitterest foe,—was it likely, was it to be hoped, was it even to be endeavoured, that Priest should be called upon to relinquish the succession in his favour. Still less that Randal Langford should, for the sake of the alien infant, alter those dispositions which all his secret partiality for his own admirable son had not prevented him from making? But now Priest and his mother had been sud-

denly swept away, and she herself alone remained.

That her father loved her, and with much of that intensity which it was in his nature to feel when once affection was excited, she knew; and consequently that he took considerable satisfaction in looking upon her as his future representative. Even that pride of an uninterrupted male descent, for so many centuries the glory of his house, seemed, in comparison, little to affect him. His mind was not of a nature, perhaps, to dwell with much interest upon such an imaginary good.

The mortification he had in secret felt, at having to bestow his estate, and be succeeded by a man he disliked and despised, as he did his son Priest, would have been sufficient to counterbalance any self-gratulation upon such a subject, had he been inclined to entertain such. The substitution of Emma, on the contrary, though she were but a daughter, was evidently a source of gratification, which seemed to gather strength every day. Emma understood, was grateful for, and was

made very happy by the knowledge that she was able to excite such feelings, but this did not alter her purpose. Her head was clear and her heart disinterestedness itself. She was perfectly single-minded; the objects before her lay distinctly defined, and her purpose once decided upon was not to be slightly changed. She was, moreover, endowed with that rare and precious appendage to ardent characters, undeviating patience and unhalting perseverance in the pursuit of her object. Rare and most precious qualities they may in truth be called, when united, to so much purity of intention; such absolute and generous disregard of selfish considerations; such simple straightforward endeavour after the just and the right, as actuated this fine girl.

Two objects, to her of the deepest interest, she had in view—the first, late as it was, to right Edwin in his child, though at the sacrifice of all those worldly distinctions which were now her own;—the second—upon which she dwelt with even greater anxiety—to heal the cruel wounds of her father's heart, poisoning every hour

of his existence, by raising him to purer and nobler sentiments, and leading him to forgive and be reconciled with his adversary.

Forgiveness!—That blessed word—significant of a virtue almost unknown, even to the heroic ages of the antique world, upon the very frontispiece, as it were, of the new.

Forgiveness!—And what were man without forgiveness? It is the harbinger of every other kindly grace and virtue. Oh! could she but bring her father's heart to this,—what heavenly graces and influences would follow! Flowing down like the rich ointment—purifying his soul—setting free the genial currents of feeling so long dried up, and rendering Randal Langford that which her instincts taught her he ought ever to have been.

The family events which had succeeded each other with so much fearful rapidity, aided her generous purposes in one respect; the character of those which at this moment overcast the political world, favoured her still further in the other.

But the relation of what ensued must be proceeded with. It will be necessarily brief—for time presses, space contracts, and the energy of the narrator is failing.

Mr. Langford and his daughter had been walking over the estate together. He loved to have Emma in his company at all times, but more particularly, when going over and inspecting his property; exactly the reverse of that jealous feeling which had with regard to his sons made him reserved in his communication, and cautious of admitting their interference. With them he seldom voluntarily discussed any question relative to the management either of his estate or fortune.

As regarded his daughter, all was changed. It seemed as if he could never be content to transact even the smallest detail of business without Emma taking a share in it; and every point of importance he talked over and discussed with her in the most open and confidential manner.

He seemed to take pleasure in observing with his own eyes, beforehand, as it were, what would be her conduct when in possession of power, and how she would adorn the eminent position in which he intended to place her. So, he encouraged her to interfere in every way in the management of that which was before long to be her own.

It was some time before Emma ventured to interrupt this course of proceeding by any direct allusion to the subject with which her heart was full; but this day, after the long walk which they had been taking together, about the property, Mr. Langford more pointedly than usual alluded to the succession he intended for her.

“When I am gone, Emma,” he said, “and everything here is yours, then . . .”

“Papa, I have very long wished to speak to you upon something which lies heavily at my heart, but I have been afraid . . .”

His countenance changed; his eye clouded over. A sort of fear, like that of one about to suffer intolerable pain, seemed to seize him. He said,—

“ If you have anything of importance to communicate, Emma, do not be afraid to speak. But if it be *not* of importance, and of great importance—child ! do not stir up the embers of old sorrows,” and he almost shuddered.

“ God forbid ! God forbid ! I should lightly do or say anything that could give you pain—dear—dear papa ; but—I must—I ought—and time presses. What ought to be done, should be done I think as quickly as one can, papa,” sliding her arm into his ; for she had lately lost all fear of him whom every one else feared, and this was one reason perhaps why he loved her so. “ Papa, are you aware of what happened, a few months ago ? ”

“ Yes—no—a few weeks ago, you and I, Emma, were left here alone ; I have known of no greater events since. Of those which took place before, Emma,—you will not talk to me now—Now ! nor ever. Child, child ! you will never allude to those—for I think you love me.”

He said this with much emotion.

Poor Emma ! Her heart began to fail

her; but the painful subject was entered upon—better have done with it at once. “Only one thing, dear papa. One question I feel I ought—that I must—that I ought to ask. I do not know—I think—I should . . . Did my mother—did they tell you? People thought, I believe, the child would die, for he was a sickly infant; and so perhaps they did not tell you—but I think you ought to be informed, that the child has thriven and lives, and is a fine and healthy baby.”

“The child!—yes. You cannot suppose that I was ignorant of the birth of the child—I heard it was a puny thing, and would in all probability die. But I was sick of the very name of death. Say no more about it. *That* child, living or dead, is nothing to me.”

“Ah, papa!”

“Emma! Emma! I love you—you know I love you. How can you take such an ungenerous advantage of my affection?”

“I—? I—?”

“How can you dare intrude a subject upon me; which you know no other

living creature would venture in the most distant manner to allude to.—No, not for their lives.”

There was something of the old terror kindling in his eye, as he spoke.

“ Because I ought,” said she courageously.

“ You ought *not*,” said he,—and his voice was rising.—“ You ought *not* ! There is cruelty—there is impiety—there is a rash braving of my feelings, which you shall not—you ought not to dare . . . ”

“ Papa, forgive me ! Pray—pray forgive me ! Put yourself into my place. Think of me. Would you ?—will I ?—No you would not, and I will not—suffer the helpless and the innocent to be wronged for my benefit.”

“ You would reject this proof of your father’s love and esteem, then, Emma ? Very well.—There are other heirs to be found. Do not think, my girl, because—with the hasty impetuosity of your warm heart, you are ready to fling the estate your father destined for you away,—that as a necessary consequence the inheritance must devolve upon the grandson

of Marcus Fitzroy. Don't fancy *that*, Emma. So be at rest, and say no more about it—say no more about it.”

“ But, papa—father—Edwin ! ”

“ Emma mention that name again and you and I are strangers for ever. Cruel, barbarous child ! ”

The heart of poor Emma now was sinking fast. She had confided too far she found in her power thus to plead the discarded infant's cause. This painful attempt was utterly abortive. She had effected literally nothing. There are characters, she found, like the rock of adamant — the waves may beat against them for ever in vain ; not the slightest impression can be made. She could find nothing more to say, and her father, whose rising passion seemed now nearly to have mastered him, went on with increasing wildness,

“ You have uttered that name.—You have in your unkindness dared to stir those embers of the dreadful fire, which, never altogether slumbering, is slowly consuming life away. You have profaned the ashes of the dead, by giving to the

air a name to be buried in everlasting silence. Edwin! Edwin! my boy! my son! My loved my treasured son! You to marry into the family of my most detested, and most justly detested, enemy! —You, Edwin! —You to enter the family of the man I abhorred beyond the power of language to express—to take his child to your bosom, and make her the partner of your fortunes—to bring her and place her by that hearth where Eleanor Wharncliffe once sat—and complete the misery, the degradation, and ruin of the man whose life *he* shipwrecked! What, Edwin! the very boy—the very son! Eleanor's, *my* Eleanor's, son! That he should do this! should drive this barbed shaft into his father's breast! And that you, Emma—you, Emma! you whom I loved next—whom I had learned to love, seared, burned-up as my heart had been—you, Emma! to come and probe this cruel wound, and rouse these maddening fires! You to do it! And all for what? For a poor, puling, unknown abortion, a stranger to both you and me! whom neither of us *have* seen, whom we neither

of us care to see ! You ! to do this ; and for what ? To complete the misery and desolation of my existence ? and close the tale by laying me upon my death-bed ; execrating from the deepest recesses of my soul the being you have placed there to succeed me ! ”

“ No, papa, no ! ” interrupted Emma, with much emotion, and looking very pale ; “ no ! I have done ; I cannot, I dare not, urge more.—Forgive me ; but one thing let me dare venture to say, before a conversation ends that I never shall willingly renew. Do not think I can, even for your sake, dear, dear papa, be a party to what seems to me a wrong and an injustice ; a robbery committed upon the fatherless and the defenceless. Leave your estate, if so it must be, to those distant relations to whom you alluded ; but do not give it to me. It would lie as a heavy curse upon me if I kept it ; and if I kept it not, it would be given up to Edwin’s child.”

“ Then I *will* take care—” He almost shouted as he shook off her arm, and tearing himself hastily away, made as if he

would return to the house. But after taking a few steps in advance, he turned round, and coming back to where she stood in a drooping attitude, the picture of disappointment and despondency, with one or two large tears falling from her eyes upon the grass, "Emma," he said, "you are a brave and good girl; and I sometimes wish——"

"What! what, papa?" she cried, seizing his arm again, and looking eagerly into his eyes.

"That it had pleased God to give me a different heart!"

A week or two more has passed, and now Emma is upon her knees before her father.

Randal Langford is sitting in the usual arm-chair in his study, and Emma, every feature straining, her face glowing, her eyes glistening, is kneeling at his feet, and embracing his knees in a sort of wild passion of entreaty, is crying out in a voice almost inarticulate,—

"Now, now, now! Or never! never!"

The bloodhounds are on his track. A few more hours, and he may be, he must be, taken, and all, all will be over for ever! Papa, papa! father, father! Now, now is the moment. Forgive your enemy—Save your enemy—rescue your enemy! Oh! think it is your bitter enemy! Oh, papa, papa! think, think! Save his life!—Save his life!—save his life! Oh, papa, papa! Say the word! Save him, save him!”

The fixed and iron features seemed not to relax in the least; yet there were signs of an inward struggle.

“Oh, it is so good of God to give you this opportunity! Think, think, papa! Your cruel enemy! To save his life! the life of your bitterest enemy! Oh, God is good, father! His life! his life!”

The cry smote upon his heart at last, and the iron nature at once gave way. Suddenly he bent down, snatched up his daughter in his arms, clasped her passionately to his breast, a flood of tears burst forth from his eyes, and he cried out, “Fly, Emma,—fly, fly! and save him!”

Two passionate kisses upon her father’s cheeks, and Emma flew to give orders, and

to offer that shelter to the outlawed man which might save him from the myrmidons of justice, now in full pursuit. A chain of circumstances, which I have not space to relate, had driven Marcus Fitzroy a fugitive, to preserve his life, into the memorable neighbourhood of Ravenscliffe.

And so these two men once more met again — but under what new circumstances !

A brave and generous creature was this time the benign genius whose influence pervaded the scene. They met, after the cruel sufferings of their mutual lives, to find rest — where alone rest was to be found—in mutual forgiveness. Lord Fermanagh had, perhaps, the harder part to play, for he had to humble himself to receive benefits from the hand of one so long his enemy. Randal Langford's was a more soothing task—to heap kindnesses upon the head of his life's foe.

Lord Fermanagh, disgusted with the barbarous violence of the plans in contemplation—the full extent of which at length

became known to him—had for some time abandoned the cause of the Defenders. But this proceeding immediately exposed him to the most imminent dangers. He was now become to his late party an object of the most inveterate jealousy and hatred; their secrets were in his hands, and his destruction could alone, as they thought, ensure their safety.

Upon the other hand, the share he had taken in the conspiracy had been made known to the Government, and its agents were in active pursuit of him. He was forced suddenly to fly his country in order to secure himself from the enmity of his old allies, should he fall into their hands; and the disgrace of a public trial, and probably a public execution, if taken by the Government. To reach France, except by passing through England, was at that time nearly impossible. His only resource seemed to be to cross the narrow straights between Port Patrick and Donaghadee in an open boat. This he happily effected, and having landed without discovery, he plunged at once into that tract of wild and mountainous country which,

commencing with the northern spurs of the Cheviot, extends far into Northumberland, Durham, and Yorkshire, and towards the southern extremity of which Ravenscliffe was situated.

A wilder and more desolate region can scarcely be imagined. It was literally an almost impervious wilderness. There, by a singular fatality, the wearied and hunted victim of political dissensions was driven to take refuge, and Emma had discovered, and through her intercession with her father, saved him.

I need not, for it will be, I believe, unnecessary here, detail the change—the regeneration effected in Randal Langford's heart by this one triumph over the besetting sin of his nature. One such honest triumph is probably the secret of most regenerations. Till the monster vice—the besetting sin be subdued, the conquest over minor faults is futile and deceptive; the exterior conduct may be rendered more regular, but the heart remains unchanged. But that victory once achieved, and, like the master-stroke

of some great captain in war, all other conquests become light and easy.

When the fury of political animosity began to subside, and the effervescence of the times to be a little abated, Randal, by making strenuous use of all the interest he possessed, obtained a full pardon for Lord Fermanagh.

Between these men, so long divided—a friendship of a strong and peculiar nature grew up, which continued to the end of their lives. Geraldine and her infant and the good old aunt were invited to take refuge at Ravenscliffe.

Randal's heart expanded to them all. Geraldine and Emma were as if they had been sisters in blood; the boy grew up blue-eyed and fair, the living representative of his father, and of Eleanor Wharncliffe—that being so idolized, and once the cause of such furious enmity between two men—now, as it would seem, united in the same sympathy. The child was an object of equal interest to both, and he grew up worthy of it all.

Randal Langford lived many years after this. He still continued reserved as ever in his habits, and passed his time in almost unbroken retirement; but he was a changed man, and a happy one. He employed himself in the care of his large property, righteously and faithfully fulfilling the tasks which his station in society imposed. Yet stern and cold as seemed his heart by nature, one deep want he had. Some one Randal Langford must have to love, with all the intensity of which his affections were capable.

Emma occupied the place, which it seemed necessary to his existence to have filled. To love where his moral approbation was not excited, was impossible. Esteem was with him the necessary basis of all strong affection. Emma fulfilled every condition, and he ended by loving her beyond the power of words to express. He showed this deep feeling of mingled esteem and love for her in his own peculiar way;—but however displayed, it found its way to Emma's heart, and she was completely happy.

To witness in her father that restoration

to peace of mind which had been her own work,—to watch the gradual development, under her fostering hand, of all the latent fine qualities of his nature,—to see him surrounded by those most interesting to her,—Geraldine, Lord Fermanagh, the boy,—loving and worthily beloved,—was a rich reward. She loved them all tenderly herself, yet never any one to compare with her father. A strong sympathy seemed to bind her peculiarly to him.

After a time Mr. Sullivan joined the party, but as a friend only. He took no part in the education of the young heir of Ravenscliffe. By the priest's express desire, united to that of Lord Fermanagh, Geraldine consented that her son should be brought up a Protestant.

Whether Emma ever married herself I never heard. She had a handsome fortune of her own; for her father took care that out of his abundance, the child he honoured and loved should have all, and more than all, that she could possibly need. But, whether she preferred the pleasures of independence, satisfied with the strong affection she felt for those

around her, I cannot tell. Marriage to such a character may be an addition, but cannot be an essential to happiness.

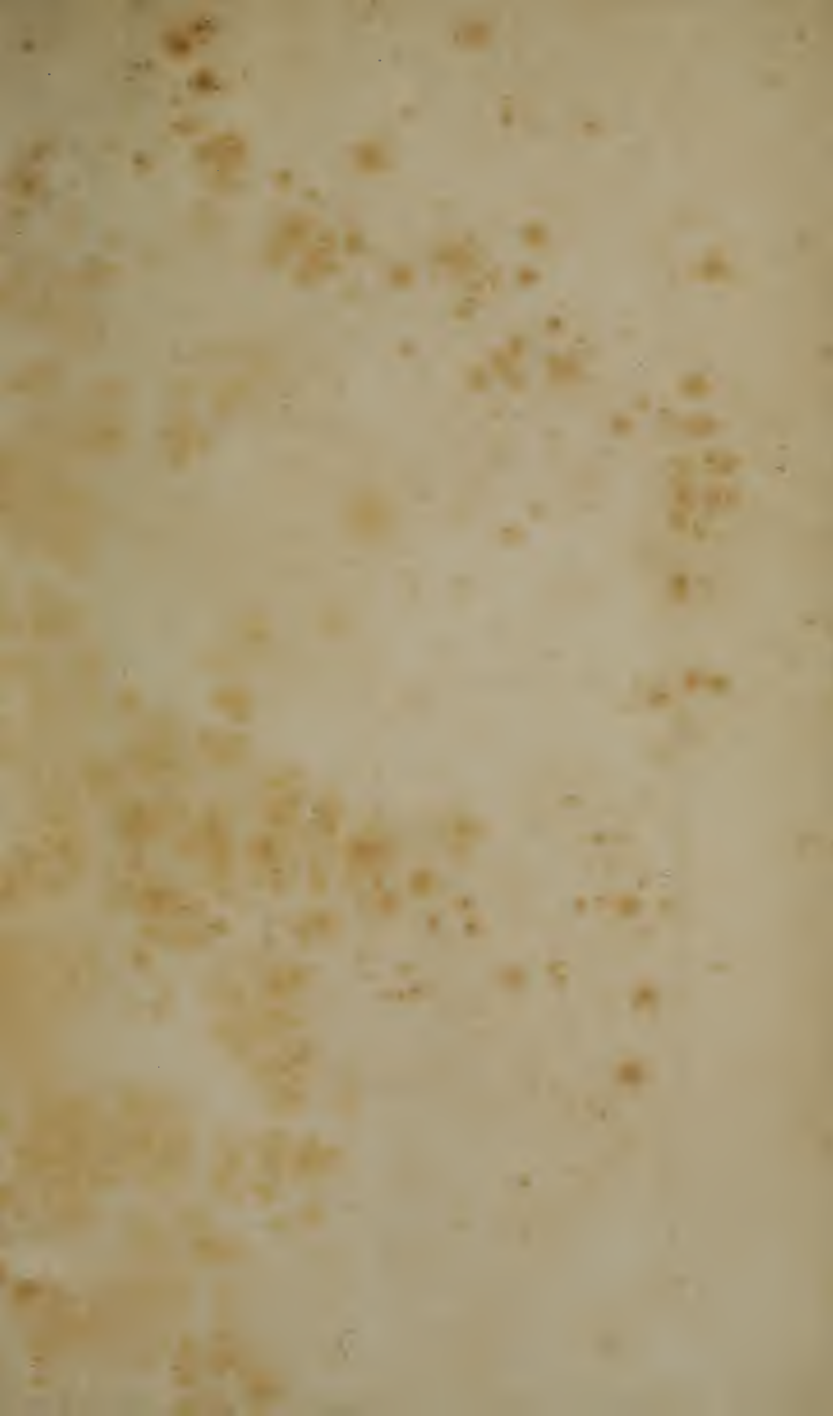
If Emma met in life one worthy to exercise her affectionate temper under a form still dearer than that of filial and sisterly love, I doubt not she married. If no such being came across her path, I as little doubt that she let marriage alone.

Either way such a character must be happy.

Farewell.

THE END.

P







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